
(CANADA $3.95) • U.S. $2.95
THE ORIGINAL AND UNEQUALED TERROR TRIP OF THEM ALL!
A NOVEL BY SIMON HAWKE BASED ON THE SCREENPLAY WRITTEN BY VICTOR MILLER
FRIDAY THE 13TH

Prologue

Ki Ki Ki Ma Ma Ma

Night is the best time for stories. It's dark at night. What you can't see in the darkness you imagine.

Sounds you don't hear in the daytime seem very loud, significant, and ominous. A slight rustling in the bushes, a faint creak on the stair outside the bedroom door. Perhaps it's only the wind. Perhaps it's only the house settling. Perhaps. But sounds at night can be disturbing. Noises in the darkness make the imagination see what the naked eye cannot. The imagination feeds on darkness and it's hungry at night.

It began as stories often do, around a campfire on a warm summer night. The time was 1958. The place: Camp Crystal Lake. Imagine log cabins set back in the trees, picnic tables, a small dock sticking into a lake surrounded by deep woods, a few rowboats and canoes. There were a thousand places just the same. summer camps run on a shoestring by small town families; The Christy's in this case.

Nice people, fond of kids. Places that remained locked most the year, sitting idle. Not costing any money except for a few months in the summer when the operating costs were small enough to allow for a little profit. Camp Crystal Lake wasn't one of those large, well-financed places with a fleet of paddle boats. A corral full of horses, and a small fortune in sporting goods equipment. It was just a small family owned business, cheap to run, cheap to attend. A few cabins nestled in the pine trees on a lake shore near a small town where the lower income families could afford to send their children for a short vacation. Not a bad business if you're not looking for a lot of money. You hired a few older kids as counselors who doubled as the setup crew. Arriving a couple of weeks early to open the camp, turn on the water, and do a little maintenance. In return, they got the opportunity to roam in the woods, relax, and have a little fun. Perhaps even a summertime romance, and you didn't have to pay them much. It beat the hell out of working as a fry cook at McDonald's.

The Counselors took care of the kids when they arrived, so you didn't have to do much. You didn't really even have to be there. Maybe in the early spring, you'd hire a plumber to replace some pipes that had frozen or cracked during the winter. Maybe you'd buy a new rowboat every few years.

Some cots and outdoor furniture. All insignificant expenditures. The overhead was low, the time involved was minimal. The operation practically ran itself. What could go wrong? The camp had just been open for the summer but it was going to be a short season. The

counselors had spent the day sweeping and cleaning doing a little bit of carpentry, hauling out the targets for the archery range, storing the supplies. Most of the work was finished; they'd been at it for about a week and none of them was a stranger anymore, if you had already grown close. As they sat around the campfire singing "Michael row your boat ashore," Barry hugged his legs and watched Claudette playing the guitar. The two of them were singing an all together different song, one that did not require any words. Their eyes sent messages. Claudette finished playing as they sang of the last "hallelujah" and wordlessly handed the guitar over to one of the other girls. Her gaze locked with Barry's. Barry stood and offered her his hand. She took it smiling knowingly and they left the campfire as the group started singing "Hang down your head Tom Dooley…"

The sounds of singing and the guitar receded as they walked through the darkness toward the barn.

The crickets were also singing in the night. Claudette hesitated at the entrance to the barn, pulling back on Barry's hand.

"Somebody'll see," she said.

"No they won't," Barry tugged her gently by the hand, leading her into the darkness of the barn. He closed the door behind him and flipped on a light. As he turned, Claudette rushed into his arms, their lips met in a long kiss.

"Does Mary-Ann kiss as good as I do?" Claudette asked coyly when they both came up for air.

"How would I know?" Barry said, a bit too quickly.

"Oh, you."

"Come on."

He took her hand again and led her up the steps to the loft. Claudette picked up a worn woolen blanket. She paused, staring at him uncertainly.

"You said you were special," she said as if reading from a script used by countless young couples before them, performing the necessary motions of the courtship ritual; the unspoken agreement sealed with knowing gazes and lingering kisses. The token protests, the need for reassurance at the very last minute.

"I meant everything," Barry said, kissing her to prove it. Perhaps he really did, but it was more likely he didn't and she probably knew it too. The physical need two people felt for one another was only the beginning. Sometimes it was an end in itself. A brief sharing of pleasure and he had mutually fulfilled and selflessly taken. Sometimes it was only a catalyst for something deeper: a bond of real intimacy, but that kind of intimacy only came with time and although they didn't know it, neither Barry nor Claudette had much time left.

As they settled down on the blanket they had spread on the

floor of the loft, huddling close and holding one another, the barn door downstairs opened slowly. Soft footsteps made little sound as they move towards the stairs. The music of youthful passion covered the sounds of the measured tread moving stealthily towards the steps. A faint creak the footsteps hesitated but no, they didn't hear.

"Ohhhh…" Claudette moaned and then she stiffened slight as she felt Barry's hand fumbling with the zipper on her shorts.

"No," she said, catching his hand but not really fighting.

"Come on," said Barry, his voice plaintive, his lips gently brushed her ear.

"A Man's not made of stone, " she giggled, "Oh please," she sighed as if with resignation and released his hand. Then her eyes widened as she saw a shadowy figure standing in the darkness at the entrance to the loft.

"Somebody's there."

They both sat up in alarm, buttoning up and tucking in, smiling nervously and blushing, feeling self-conscious.

"We… we weren't doing anything," Barry said quickly. He stood up as the figure in the shadows moved towards them. He smiled guiltily and shrugged. "Hey, really we were just messing around—"

The knife plunged deep into his stomach. He gasped with pain and shock, doubling over. His hands instinctively going to the wound. The room started to spin and he fell back, landing on a roll of chicken wire, clutching his stomach. Warm blood spilt out between his fingers and ran from the corner of his mouth as life ebbed quickly. Claudette brought her hands up to her face and screamed.

The killer came towards her but it backed away, a gaze riveted to the bloody hunting knife, eight inches of steel streaked with scarlet. She couldn't tear her eyes away from it. She shook her head, unwilling to believe this was happening.

"No! Please, no!" She whimpered, darting to the left then to the right, but the killer followed her motions, blocking off escape, slowly closing the distance between them. She panicked and sought shelter behind a pile of boxes, grabbing them and throwing them, backing away, looking desperately for a way out, but she was cornered. She suddenly felt her back up against the wall and there was no escape. She screamed as she saw the gleaming knife rise in stock, its swift descent. It was like a streak of fire across her chest. A burning incandescent pain more agonizing than anything she had ever felt. The blade bit deeply, ripping through her flesh, sinking in up to the hilt. It rose again and fell and rose and fell and rose and fell, over and over. Claudette wasn't screaming anymore but still the killer hacked away like a runaway machine and over the sounds of metal thudding into flesh and bone that came a distant sounds of singing from around the

campfire.

"Hang down your head, Tom Dooley… poor boy you're going to die…"

Chapter 1

"Small towns don't change much over the years. If anything, they get even smaller. The children grow up and move away to bigger towns and bigger opportunities. Those few that stay behind replaced the old folks as they died, providing not so much an infusion of fresh blood as a dose of Geritol. Just a small shot of tonic to keep the old town going. Businesses closed, perhaps losing their customers to the new shopping mall in the next town or simply finding they're unable to complete in an economy that is increasingly geared towards mass production and cheap foreign labor rather than quality and service. The regulators sit at the bar or at the soda fountain. Some still exist and if you can find them, they're generally worth looking for and they tell remember when stories or whatever happened to stories. Remember when Al Clary's little girl run off with that motorcycle gang back in '56? And when the police picked her up in… where was it? Brattleboro? She come home with that tattoo. Damn, you could hear old Al scream clear over the county seat.

"Whatever happened to Bonnie Clearly anyway?"

"Heard she went out to California. Married some producer."

"What? Bonnie? Married a producer?"

"Shoot. No kiddin', really? What I heard. Course, you know what they say 'Everyone out in California is a producer,' right? She ever get in any pictures? Knowing Bonnie, if she got into any pictures, they ain't the kind you'd show your mother."

Often, there were particular stories that were told over and over. Stories that become part of the folklore of the town, part of its history. In Crystal Lake, it was the story of 'Camp Blood.'

'Camp Blood,' as it came to be called, was the place on the outskirts of the town, about ten miles down the country road owned by Christy family. For 20-some odd years, the story had survived, passed down orally like an Indian myth. It survived because it possessed all of the ingredients that made for a legend. It centered on a place: Camp Crystal Lake. Only the locals called it 'Camp Blood' and its focus was violent death and mystery. The mystery was that no one had ever learned who caused the deaths or why, and it concerned a local family: the Christys, who owned the place and tried to fight the legend to no avail. Ever since 1958, each time they tried to get the camp going again, something stopped them; stopped them in a way that only added to the legend of 'Camp Blood.' Some said it began in 1957, after that young boy had drowned. His name was Jason Voorhees, Pamela Voorhees' boy. A shy child, quiet and strange, went swimming alone out in Crystal Lake.

They never found his body. Other said it began in '58, when

those two young camp counselors were killed. They found the horribly mutilated bodies in the barn, hacked to pieces.

The girl who had found them, the murdered girl's bunkmate, had been taken to the country hospital in a state of nervous shock. Some claim she got better; others insisted that she was still in an institution somewhere, locked up in a padded cell and screaming about blood. The police had never solved the murders. Theories abounded, depending on who told the story. The murders were either committed by one of the other counselors in a jealous homicidal rage, or an escaped inmate from an insane asylum or by a Satan cult or some deranged derelict living in the woods still on the loose, still out there somewhere, or if you listened to Crazy Old Ralph, by vengeful ghosts or ravaging demons or by little green men from a UFO. The story varied according to how much Old Ralph had to drink, but then, nobody listened to Old Ralph anyway.

Old Ralph was the town geek. No small town was complete without one. Big cities had them too, more than their share, but in big cities, geeks completely wandered the streets talking to themselves and carrying all of their belongings in shopping bags, sleeping in parks or down in the subways. They were ignored by a population that considered them a nuisance and didn't really want to see them, lest they feel some spark of human pity. People in small towns noticed, maybe no one listened to them but at least they noticed them, which made for some kind of human interaction.

Old Ralph was happier in the town of Crystal Lake than he would have been in a big city. He had no friends except his imaginary ones and his long-suffering wife, but people noticed him and knew him.

Every now and then, he'd get tanked up and hear the call. He would mount up his old swim newsboy special, the kind of bike you don't see anymore. With sheet metal wrapped around the top frame rail, so that it looks like it has a gas tank. The kind with the big balloon tires and springs under the seat. He would ride out like Paul Revere, shouting the gospel, doing the Lord's work, a latter-day Reverend Jonathan Edwards, preaching to the sinners. A Puritan, warning of an Angry God. Nobody listened, but at least they heard him and because they heard him, they called the Sheriff and Officer Dorf would be sent to bring Ralph in to sleep it off.

It was a symbiotic relationship. It made Old Ralph feel noticed and it made Officer Dorf feel like a real policeman. You couldn't feel like a real policeman if you didn't get to arrest someone every now and then and Dorf needed to feel like a real policeman. He needed his big Harley-Davidson electra-glide with the siren and the lights. He needed his spit-shined riding boots and his crash helmet with the department's gold insignia painted on. He needed his hand-tooled gun belt loaded

down with every conceivable accessory a police officer could possibly desire. From the leather holster to the billy club to the chrome steel handcuffs to speed loaders and to the special police Kel flashlight and the utility snap pouches where he carried chewing gum and breath mints. He liked to use the ten code when he spoke on the Motorola radio, just like the cops on TV, despite the fact that there were only four officers on the Crystal Lake Police Force and there wasn't any need to abbreviate everything by using numbers instead of simple phrases in plane English. Dorf dreamed about leaving Crystal Lake and becoming a policeman in a big city like New York or Los Angeles. He felt trapped in Crystal Lake but his police paraphernalia and his Wyatt Earp attitude helped him to live out his dream at least a little bit.

Annie Phillips on the other hand, had felt trapped by the big city. She needed to get away every chance she got which was mostly during summer vacations when she took jobs as a cook at various camps. It paid a little more than just being a counselor and good cooks were always in demand. It gave her a chance to get out into the country and breathe fresh air for a few weeks. She lived for it.

She dreamed of leaving the city forever and moving to a log cabin or a frame house in the country.

Perhaps starting a small crafts business or getting a job as cook in a resort hotel. She and Dorf might had an interesting conversation about the pros and cons of their respective dreams but Dorf wasn't on hand to welcome her to Crystal Lake when she arrived. He was out cruising the highway looking for speeders.

All Annie had to welcome her as she hiked into town was Ed Brian's dog, Winslow, who watched the pumps for Ed and barked whenever a car pulled in. Since Annie didn't have a car, Winslow decided not to bark. Better to let Ed sleep than risk a sharp rap on the noggin with a rolled up newspaper for raising a false alarm. Instead, Winslow sat up between the pumps and unfurled his tongue, wagging his tail for affection. It worked and Annie shucked her knapsack and knelt down beside the dog, stroking his fur.

"Well, Hiya girl—uhh excuse me, Hi boy!" she laughed. It was a gorgeous day. The town was quiet and peaceful, about as far removed from the noise of New York City as possible.

"Hey, can you speak English?" she said, laughing and ruffling the dog's fur. "How far is it to Camp Crystal Lake?"

It was the most attention Winslow had received in months and he whined in appreciation.

"That far, huh? Okie dokie, see you later!" Annie groaned as she hoisted the backpack onto her shoulders. She had hiked in all the way from the interstate and had hoped there'd be more traffic around town so she could hitch a ride to the camp, but there wasn't a car in

sight. The town looked quite dead.

"Well, you wanted peace and quiet," she said to herself, "I guess you got it." She passed several buildings and turned onto the main street of the town. She saw a number of cars parked in front of a general store and a coffee shop. She decided to take a chance and stop in to ask directions. Perhaps someone would volunteer to drive her. The radio was tuned in to an AM station playing "Sail away, tiny sparrow" as she walked in, causing a small bell mounted over the door to tinkle. There were several people in the shop, seated at the counter. Small town folks, an older woman dressed in a white uniform with rhinestone glasses stood behind the counter, a couple of New England types in red and black Buffalo plaids, jeans, work boots, and truckers caps perched on the stools.

"It's 7:01 on Friday the 13th of June!" The radio announcer said in that obsequious DJ voice that sounds like a cross between a game show host and Woody the Woodpecker. "This is Big Dave and it's time for you lazybones to get out of bed! It's Black Cat Day in Crystal Lake."

"I must have seen that cold track 82 times," the woman behind the counter said to one of the coffee drinkers in response to a comment Annie hadn't heard.

"Uh hi, excuse me," she said to be heard over the radio, but the woman behind the counter had turned down the radio at the same moment so Annie's voice suddenly sounded unnaturally loud.

"How far is it to Camp Crystal Lake from here?"

Everyone turned to stare at her. For a moment, she thought perhaps the fly on her jeans was unzipped or something because they simply kept staring but then the woman behind the counter broke the silence.

"What is it, Enos?" she said, "About 10 miles?"

"About that," replied Enos, a heavyset man in a plaid shirt and baseball cap.

'Terrific,' Annie thought. She didn't relish the thought of hiking another ten miles.

"Camp Blood?" one of the other men said, "Don't tell me they're opening that place up again."

"Lots of luck," said Enos, shaking his head. Annie sighed, not really following the conversation, just thinking about the ten miles she had yet to go.

"Can I get a bus or something?"

"Not likely," the man who mentioned 'Camp Blood' answered.

"You going out to the crossroads aren't you Enos?" said the woman behind the counter. "What about giving the girl a lift? That'll be about halfway," she added, looking at Annie with a smile.

"No sweat, Trudy," Enos said. He made getting off the stool

look like something that required manly effort. "Okay, kid, let's move it."

"Name's 'Annie'," she said, smiling at him, grateful to have five miles less to walk.

"Alright, Annie, let's go." He walked past her and opened the door, holding it for her.

"All the girls up there gonna look as good as you?" he laughed.

"I don't know."

A man who looked like a scarecrow wearing a fedora loomed up before them, lifting his palm up towards them. Annie stopped suddenly, surprised. The bony hand descended onto her shoulder as the man leaned down close to her face. His breath would have stunned an ox.

"You're going to Camp Blood, ain'tcha?" he said, glaring at her. It seemed as if any minute he was going to break into a maniacal cackle like the Wicked Witch of the West.

"Goddammit, Ralph, get out of here!" Enos gave him a hard shove. "Go on, get! Leave people alone!"

"You'll never come back alive!" cried Ralph, his voice rising in pitch.

"Oh shut up, Ralph," Enos said, leading Annie towards his truck.

"It's got a Death Curse!" Ralph persisted, rolling his eyes wildly.

"He's a real prophet of doom, ain't he?" Enos said, opening the passenger door. "Go on, climb up, miss."

He gave her a boost with a hand on her rear as she climbed up. For a moment, Annie wondered if he was copping a quick feel but she decided to forget it. He seemed reasonably harmless like crazy Old Ralph and it probably made his day. In any case, it beat walking ten miles. He went around the front of the truck and climbed in, turned the key and started the engine.

"I tell you," he said as he banged the shift lever into first with noisy grinding, "He's causing problems enough for your boss with all that talk."

The truck shuddered out of the parking lot with a sloppy clutch engagement.

"Goddamn nuisance," Enos muttered. They drove in silence for several minutes as the truck left town and headed into the country, over a small bridge and onto the country road. Enos seemed to be wrapped up in thought and Annie just stared out the window.

"He tell you anything?" Enos asked and he turned. Her eyebrows raised.

"What?"

"He tell you anything?"

"Who?"

"Your boss, Steve Christy."

"Oh," she smiled, "Yeah. I'll be cooking for 50 kids and 7 staff, including me. The campers will mostly be inner city children.

Enos waited a beat, watching the road.

"No," he said, still not looking at her, "I mean about what happened."

Annie frowned and shrugged.

"No."

Enos retreated into silence again. She waited for him to complete whatever he had been about to say, but he seemed to have thought better of it. There was a particular expression on his face.

"Come on," said Annie, "There's something you're not telling me."

Enos stared out onto the road, then he turned to look at her and said, "Quit. Quit now."

Annie's jaw dropped open.

"Quit? Why would I want to quit?"

"Camp Crystal Lake is jinxed." Enos turned back to watch the road. For a moment, she stared at him, astonished. Then, she burst out laughing.

"Oh terrific, not you too. You sound like your crazy friend back there."

"Well, maybe…" Enos said, scowling. His jaw muscles worked a moment and he glanced at her, then gazed back at the road.

"Did Christy tell you about the two kids murdered back in '58?"

She shook her head.

"About the boy who drowned back in '57?"

She shook her head again.

"About a bunch of fires they had? Nobody knows who did any of them. In 1962, they were gonna open up again. The water was bad."

He shook his head with resignation. "Steve Christy will wind up just like his folks: crazy and broke."

He glanced at her to see how she was taking it. Her face was a mixture of polite interest and skepticism.

"He's been up there for the past year, fixing up that place. He must have dropped 25,000 dollars and for what? Ask anybody. Quit."

"I can't," said Annie. Enos snorted.

"Dumb kids… know-it-alls. Just like my nieces. Heads full of rocks."

Annie laughed and shook her head.

"You're an American original," she said.

"I'm an American original," Enos mimicked her. "Dumb kid."

Annie chuckled.

"At least I'm not afraid of ghosts."

Enos gave up. What was the point? Maybe the kid was right. Maybe he was starting to sound like crazy Old Ralph. Maybe they were all afraid of ghosts in the town of Crystal Lake. He wouldn't get anybody to admit that in daylight, but at night, you couldn't pay anybody enough to go anywhere near that place. Call it Camp Crystal Lake, he thought. Call it any damn thing you like. Regrade the road. Give a few coats of fresh paint to the cabins. Do a few repairs on the dock. Fix the boathouse. Put up a nice new sign. It's still 'Camp Blood.'

Afraid of ghosts? To a stranger, it probably did sound crazy, but what happened there had happened after all. Argue with that.

He pulled up at the crossroads in front of the cemetery.

"Far as I go. You be heading that way," he pointed down to the other road, "Take care of yourself, kid."

Annie opened up the door and jumped down lightly.

"No sweat, thanks for the lift." She dragged her knapsack off the front seat and set it down between her legs, then slammed the door shut. Enos pulled off with a wave, shaking his head sadly. Annie watched him drive off. She hoped he wasn't a typical example of the folks in Crystal Lake. First crazy Old Ralph, then paranoid Enos. Sometimes, people in small towns were wary of outsiders. Maybe the folks in Crystal Lake were like that or maybe they just had something personal against the Christy family. In a small town, it didn't take much. News traveled fast. Everybody knew everyone else. It was hard to keep things quiet. It didn't take much for people or places to get a reputation. An unfortunate incident like a drowning could develop into a story of a place that had been 'jinxed,' as Enos had put it, but it had happened. When was it he had said? 1957? Years ago! Assuming it had already happened, yet he had also said something about a couple of kids being murdered in 1958.

Steve Christy hadn't said anything about that when he hired her, not that she should really blame him, even if it had been true. It had been a long time ago, but people had been funny about some things. People who were otherwise perfectly sensible could be superstitious about things like that.

That's why if you were trying to sell the house, you didn't tell perspective buyers someone had been murdered in it. Enos had also mentioned something about fires, assuming that was true as well, there was probably a perfectly logical explanation for it. Vandalism, for example. Kids fooling around at night in a place that was supposedly haunted. Something like that was always good for a thrill or maybe some of the locals had taken a hand to make sure that the Christy family didn't get their operation off the ground again. Who knew?

Still, perhaps that was something she should ask Steve about.

He seemed like a reasonable guy: straight foreword and sincere. If any of those things had really happened, there was probably a perfectly good reason why he hadn't told her. It might be difficult to get people to work there if they thought the place was jinxed. But if there was a change they could expect some trouble from the locals, Annie wanted to know about it.

She shrugged and picked up her pack. Now SHE was getting paranoid. It was that easy. It didn't take much. She started walking down on the road and soon she had put Enos and crazy Ralph and their ghost stories out of her mind. It was going to be a good summer. The peaceful quiet and beauty of the country. A placid lake. Camp fires and songs. And who knew? Maybe even a sweet, foxy hunk thrown in and she'd be getting paid for it. Nothing like a couple of months in the woods to get your head straight before you went back to the city and to school, to noise, cold and pollution and too many people in too small a place. One of these days, she would find out just the right place to settle down, but for now, she had nothing more complicated to look foreword to than cooking a few meals and kicking back at night to watch the stars or go skinny dipping in the lake.

She had walked perhaps two or three miles when she heard the sound of a car coming up behind her. She turned and smiled and stuck out her thumb. It was a Jeep, moving quickly down the road. It passed her without slowing down and she made a wry face. But then the driver hit the breaks and pulled to the side of the road. She hitched up her pack and ran to the Jeep. Things were looking up already! She'd probably catch a ride all the way up to the camp. She opened the door, shrugged out of her pack and tossed it in the back.

"Hi!" she said, smiling at the driver as she got in. "I'm going to Camp Crystal Lake."

The driver shifted into first and the wheels spun for a moment int the loose dirt on the shoulder, then found traction and the Jeep shot forward.

"I'm going to be on the staff up at the camp," she said, trying to make pleasant conversation. The driver remained silent. Annie shrugged. She knew that small town people didn't talk as much as city people but there was no harm in trying to be friendly.

"I guess I always wanted to work with children," she continued, "I hate it when people call them kids. Sounds like little goats," she grinned. No reaction from the driver.

"Anyway, when you've had a dream as long as I have, I guess you'll do anything," she said. The driver didn't ask about her dream, so Annie just decided to shut up and watch the scenery. It went by at quite a rapid clip. 'God,' she thought, 'first, you get some crazy old coot who tells you that you're going to die. Then, you get some paranoid

redneck who wants you to quit your job and go back to where you came from, and now the silent treatment. Maybe she shouldn't have said anything about Camp Crystal Lake. Maybe she should have just waited until they got to the road leading to the camp and said, 'You can let me out right here.' Maybe the people in the town of Crystal Lake really did have something against Steve Christy. She decided to be grateful for small favors at least she was getting a ride and at the speed they were going, they'd be there soon. She wouldn't have to put up with the silent treatment for much longer.

They were driving well over the speed limit. She watched the trees whip by and then a small road leading off on a diagonal with a signpost that said "Camp Crystal Lake." She turned and watched it recede.

"Hey! Wasn't that the road for Camp Crystal Lake back there?" She said. No response from the driver.

The Jeep didn't slow down. She glanced back out the window, then stared at the driver nervously.

"Uh… think we'd better stop. You can let me out right here."

The Jeep did not slow down.

"Please?" said Annie, starting to feel a little frightened. The Jeep sped up.

"Please! Stop!"

The driver didn't even look at her.

"Please! Stop!"

Now, the driver looked and Annie panicked at the expression of utter loathing and cold fury in those eyes. She fumbled for the door handle, forgetting all about her backpack and managed to get the door open. The wind whistled past her as she struggled to push it open. They had to be doing 60. She jumped, she cried out as she struck the dirt shoulder of the road and rolled down into a ditch.

For a moment, she lay stunned, feeling the shock of the impact and the sudden pain shooting up her leg. The tires screeched as the driver hit the brakes, the engine revved as the Jeep was shifted into reverse. Then Annie heard it backing up. She had no idea what the driver was going to do and she had no intention on waiting around to find out. She struggled to her feet, wincing with pain. Her leg would barely support her. She saw the Jeep approaching quickly and she turned and limped off into the woods, trying to get out of sight. As she hobbled into the shelter of the trees, she heard the Jeep stop and the door slam. Fear sent adrenaline rushing through her and she half ran, half stumbled though the bushes, ignoring the branches that had struck her face, not knowing where she was going, just fleeing in directionless panic, trying to put as much distance between herself and her pursuer as possible. She whimpered as she staggered ahead, both

from fear and pain and imagined she had heard a crashing through the brush behind her. She tried to speed up and fell, her leg buckling beneath her. She sobbed for breath, biting her lip to keep from crying out. She glanced quickly all around her. Everything was quiet. She was afraid to move, afraid to make the slightest sound. She strained to listen.

There, a footstep. Where? Where was it coming from?

She had lost all sense of direction. She turned and saw a pair of legs right in front of her. She looked up slowly and saw a knife.

"No…" she whimpered, shaking her head. Her eyes wide with fear.

"Please… no…" she backed away, scuttling in the leaves, unable to take her hands off the keen blade.

She came up against a tree.

'Get up,' her mind screamed, 'get up and run! Run!'

She struggled to her feet, using the tree for support. Her breath coming in quick gasps.

"No… please… no"

All she could see was the knife, shining brightly, coming closer. She screamed and felt a searing white-hot pain as the blade slashed across her throat, opening a deep gash that spouted blood as the knife sliced through her trachea, severing her jugular vein. Then she couldn't scream anymore as blood filled her lungs and her vision was blurred by a red mist.

Chapter 2

As Annie's life was ending in the woods about three quarters of a mile from Camp Crystal Lake, Ned Rubenstein felt that his was just beginning. He turned right at the intersection of the crossroads and gunned his brand-new Chevy pickup down the country road. The cab was filled with bluegrass music from the tape deck and the interior still had that new car smell. The truck was a present from his father for having made the honor roll every year since he had started High School. Ned was always goofing off and his father had made the promise easily, never dreaming Ned could do it, but he had underestimated him. The deal was that if Ned buckled down and worked hard for four years, he'd get a new car for graduation and be allowed to attend the college of his choice. That was all it took: a little motivation and it hadn't been that difficult to do. His reward has been a brand-new red Chevy pickup with a white camper top and a killer sound system and in the fall, he'd be heading out to California to start school at UCLA. He couldn't wait. He was already dreaming of the beach at Malibu, thinking about the girls he'd meet and the connections he would make in UCLA's film program. He'd already had a half dozen t-shirts made, all different colors, all bearing the legend "why grow up when you can make movies?" Add a couple pairs of jeans and some new Reeboks, and there was his college wardrobe. Now, all he had to do was kick back for a few lazy weeks in the woods, take some little kids on nature hikes and teach them swimming and archery, then mellow out around the campfire after they had gone to bed, drink a few beers, and smoke a joint or two while he dreamed California dreams. Everything was great. All it would take to make it a perfect summer would be meeting some foxy girl up at the lake. Jack at the other hand, wasn't taking any chances. He had brought his own.

He and Marcie were sitting in the back of the big cab, making out. They had been inseparable all through their senior year and had signed up as counselors together so they could spend the summer with each other before going off to different schools. Outwardly, they both talked about keeping their relationship going, but realistically they both realized the odds of remaining a couple were slim once they started college in different states and started meeting different people. Consequently, there was a last-minute urgency about them. They were like a bomb getting ready to go off. Ned glanced up in the rearview mirror.

"Hey Marcie."

She broke off their kiss long enough to acknowledge his presence.

"What?"

Ned grinned.

"You think there'll be other gorgeous women at Camp Crystal Lake besides yourself?"

Marcie laughed.

"Is sex all you ever think about, Ned?"

"Hey, no… no… absolutely not!"

"Ha!" Jack made a face.

"Sometimes I just think about kissing women," Ned said. He couldn't resist rubbing it in a little. He knew that Jack and Marcie hadn't made it yet. Jack had confessed as much to him one night over a few beers. It drove him Marcie apparently kissed like a nuclear reactor melting down, but always drew the line at having sex. Jack claimed it was one of the things he really like about her. Ned remembered brought up short by that particular moment.

"Now wait a minute," he had said, "Let me get this straight. It's driving you crazy she won't sleep with you and at the same time the fact that she won't have sex with you is one of the things you like about her?"

Jack had taken a long swig of beer and grinned. "Yeah, I guess it does sound sort of weird, doesn't it? But think about it… if a guy wants to get laid, there are a lot of girls around who wouldn't mind at all but I don't want to pressure Marcie. If you love somebody, you don't pressure them. Love is about trust, not lust."

"Yeah… but it sounds to me as if you're suffering from a bad case of both." Ned said, "Love AND lust."

"Look, I love Marcie, alright?" said Jack, "And if you love somebody I mean if you really love them, and you're not just bullshitting yourself, you don't try to jump their bones just because you're horny. If that's the bottom line, then you're not making love, man. You're just using someone else to get your rocks off. If you're that cheap and sleazy, you might as well whack off. At least you don't have to buy your right hand dinner. If you're doing that to someone else, you're lying to them, man. And chances are that if it's that easy, they're probably doing it to you. That's not being in love; that's just being selfish."

"Goddamn, Jack," Ned said, grinning, "You're a romantic."

"So? You think that's funny? What the hell is wrong with being romantic? Maybe if more people were romantic, they'd stay together longer."

"Well, that's what you say," said Ned, "But is it what you truly believe? This is going to be your last summer together, man. It's gotta be now or never."

"I know," said Jack, staring miserably into his beer. "I know… you don't have to tell me."

The pulled off onto the dirt road, marked with a new sign that read "Camp Crystal Lake." Ned slowed down and followed the winding dirt road through the trees until they came to a larger sign saying "Welcome to Camp Crystal Lake: established 1935." A lean, shirtless man with eyeglasses and a moustache was swinging an axe, leaning into it as he chopped at the roots of a large tree stump. Ned pulled over and parked.

"Hey, you want to give me hand over here?" the man yelled as they got out of the truck.

"Sure!" said Jack.

The shirtless man turned and called toward one of the cabins.

"Alice!"

A pretty young blonde woman came out carrying a broom.

"I want to get this tree stump out," the man said to them. "Get on this side, you pull on that side, and I'll pry on three, okay? Alice!"

"Coming!" shouted the blonde, hurrying over towards them.

He counted off, and they all put their backs into it. The stump resisted for a moment, then it went over and both Jack and Ned stumbled back slightly as it gave way.

"That's great!" said the shirtless man, taking off his work gloves. He offered Jack his hand. "I'm Steve Christy."

"Jack Kendall, this is Marcie Gilchrist."

"Hey there."

"Ned Rubinstein."

"Welcome to Camp Crystal Lake," said Steve, "This is Alice."

"Hi," the blonde woman said, smiling at them, "Uh… Steve? Cabin B's all ready."

"Oh good, said Steve, "Where's Bill? Has he finished cleaning out the boathouse yet?"

"I don't know," said Alice, "I haven't seen him in the past half hour."

"Oh," said Steve, "I wanted him to start painting right away."

Ned glanced at Jack and Marcie. What the hell was the rush?

"Well, what about Brenda?" Steve said.

"You told her to go set up the archery range," said Alice.

"No, No…" said Steve, "I'd rather she paint." He turned to face the others. "Well, come on. Let's go!" He clapped his hands together and rushed off somewhere like a man trying to get ten things done at once. Ned looked at Alice with bewilderment.

"I thought we had two weeks," he said. Alice laughed.

"Come on, I'll show you where you can stow your gear and get changed."

They barely had time to put on shorts and when Steve Christy came back, detailing jobs like a drill sergeant in a boot camp. He

seemed hyper and nervous, anxious to get everything done right away, and as fast as they worked, he thought of new things that needed to be done immediately. He kept pulling out an inventory he had made up of items from the hardware store in town. It seemed that he'd bought out their entire stock. Ned began to feel that by the time the kids arrived, they'd all be utterly exhausted.

They swept out cabins and replaced door hinges, painted trim and put new putty around the windows, installed signs on buildings with drills and wood screws, chopped firewood, installed oar locks on the rowboats, cleaned the bathrooms, and generally ran around like squirrels storing away nuts for the winter and they had just arrived. Had they known about the history about the camp and Steve Christy's personal problems, they might have understood his anxiety. As it was, they were having reservations about the laid-back summer they'd been hoping for. If this was any indication of what they could expect, it could turn out to be a real hassle. Who the hell needed a camp director who thought he was a troop commander? Still, the work needed to be done and setting up a camp properly always took a lot more time and effort than running it did. The sooner they got it done, the sooner they'd be able to relax. For the time being, they decided to give Steve Christy the benefit of the doubt, but he did seem awful nervous.

They broke for lunch, sandwiches and chips which Alice threw together because the new cook hadn't arrived yet. Steve took another trip into town to pick up more supplies. It hardly seemed possible that it was only lunchtime, considering all the work they'd done but they were making rapid progress. Even Steve started to relax a bit once he saw things were going. He sat down a box and helped Alice balance a rain gutter she was attaching to the roof.

"Here, let me give you a hand with that."

"Thanks," she said, speaking around the nails in her mouth. She needed three hands to balance the gutter, keep her own balance on the ladder, and hammer in the nails. They were all getting tired.

"Got it?"

"I got it."

Alice drove the nails in, climbed down and moved the ladder. Steve picked up a sketch pad she left lying on the deck in front of the cabin. He flipped the pages slowly. They were drawings she had made of the campsite, of the lakeshore, and of him.

"You draw very well," he said.

"Thanks," she said, "I wish I had more time to do it."

'Take the hint, Steve,' she thought, 'For God's sake, relax a little.'

"When did you do this?" Steve said.

"Last night," she said. She started hammering nails again.

Steve stared at the drawing she had made of him.

"Do I really look like that?"

She glanced over her shoulder.

"You did last night," she said. She took the remaining nails and pounded them in, then climbed down the ladder.

"You've got talent," said Steve. The conversation seemed awkward somehow. After she'd brought up last night. They'd been alone and had done a lot of talking, but nothing had been resolved. She didn't real y understand his need to go through with this. As far as she could see, the camp was nothing more than a white elephant. Steve had a real problem with it and she had problems of her own of which Steve was one. He instead on getting the camp started up again, fixing it all up and making it a going concern. He said it was to prove that the story about the place being jinxed was nonsense; that once the camp was all fixed up and it had a good season it would be easier to sell it, but she had the feeling that it was much more than that. He had to prove something to himself as well; prove that not only was there no curse on the camp but that there was no curse on the Christy family either. The place had ruined his father and he was obsessed with the idea of making a go of it, succeeding where his father had failed.

"This isn't really your cup of tea, is it?" Steve said. He'd been hoping that she would get caught up in the spirit of the whole thing. That helping working together would help bring them closer, but she was only going through the motions. Maybe that was the problem with their relationship as well.

They were only going through the motions and Alice had other options. She sighed and said nothing.

"Want to talk about it?"

"It's just a problem I'm having," she said. Nothing personal, she added, ironically.

He took a deep breath.

"Do you want to leave?"

"I don't know," she said, "I may have to go back to California to straighten something out."

"Come on," said Steve, "Give me another chance. Stay a week. Help get the place ready. By Friday if you're still not happy, I'll put you on the bus myself."

"All right. Friday," she said, "I'll give it a week,"

"Thank, Alice." He started to turn away, then stopped, looked over his shoulder and said, "Oh, and do me a favor. Check with Bill and see if we need any more paint."

She stared after him in disbelief as he walked away, carrying the box from the hardware store. She was seriously beginning to

wonder why he had wanted her to stay. Was it because they needed to see if they could work things about between them? Or was it just because he could use another warm body to get the camp ready. Well, she had given him a week. If he didn't come back down to Earth and get his head straight by next Friday, she'd be on that bus. She turned and started walking through the trees, down toward the dock. She simply couldn't understand why this whole thing was so important. It was only real estate, after all. Granted, it wasn't exactly a booming area, but would it really make that much difference if there was a summer camp established on the property? If Steve wanted to sell it, why wouldn't he just put it on the market and let it go at that? He had argued that the summer camp would make a difference; a big difference. That it would turn a basically worthless piece of property into an income producing property, which would make it that much easier to sell.

They had argued about it. She couldn't see his point. How could lakefront property be worthless?

'It isn't about whether or not it's income producing property,' she had said, 'It's about the obsession of yours with this 'Cristy family curse' nonsense. That's what it's really about, isn't it?'

'Don't be ridiculous,' said Steve said, 'You know perfectly well there isn't any curse.'

'That's right,' she had said, 'I know it perfectly well and you know it perfectly well, so why isn't that enough? Why do you have to prove it to the people in this town? Who cares what they think?'

'It isn't that,' Steve had said, 'You don't really understand.'

'So, explain it to me then,' she demanded, 'I mean, what is it? You want to stay in Crystal Lake for the rest of your life and run a summer camp two months out of the year? For heaven's sake, Steve, write it off. Put if up for sale with an agent. Cut your losses, and let's go do something with our lives.'

But it wasn't all that simple. Steve had unfinished business and he wanted her to wait and help him finish it. Meanwhile, she had unfinished business of her own back in LA and she wasn't all that certain she wanted to finish it. Maybe it was her business here with Steve. She could be finishing in any case, she had a week in which to make up her mind. Why did relationships have to be so goddamned complicated?

"Bill?" she called out to the young man working by the dock.

"Steve wants to know if we need more paint."

"The paint's all right. I think we're going to need some more thinner though."

"Okay, I'll tell him," she turned to go.

"Alice?"

"Yeah?"
"Did the others show up?"
"Yeah," she said, "Everything about that girl who was supposed to handle the kitchen. Annie."
Bill wiped his forehead with the back of his hand.
"Do you think we're going to last all summer?" he said, grinning.
"I don't know if I'm gonna last a week," she sighed.
Bill laughed, but she didn't.
She wasn't joking. Steve had phoned something else that absolutely positively needed to be done immediately and necessitated a run back into town. He had called in impromptu briefing around the Jeep and like a general making the rounds of his troops out in the field, he was issuing directives.
"Do you want that listed separately?" said Jack, who had just been put in charge of inventory.
"That's right," said Steve, "And Brenda: I want you to finish up that archery range, okay?"
"Okay," she said, having already started the jobs several times, only to be pulled of it to do something else.
"Now, if Annie gets here," Steve continued, "Get her started in the kitchen."
"Got it," Jack said.
"Do your best, alright?" said Steve, sounding somewhat less than confident. He looked at the sky.
"I'll be back sometime this evening. It's supposed to rain like hell, so get as much done as possible. I don't want to get too far behind."
"Bye," said Brenda as he drove off in his Jeep, wrapped up in his worries. She rolled her eyes.
"He neglected to mention to that in town they call this place 'Camp Blood," Ned said, wryly.
Marcie made a face.
"Next, they're gonna tell us there's poisonous snakes in the outhouse, some crocodiles in the lake."
"Nah," said Ned, "The crocodiles are in the cabins."
Brenda grinned. They had found a tiny lizard in one of the cabins earlier that morning. A little salamander. But by the time Ned was finished, he had her half believing it really was a baby crocodile.
'They look like that when they're really little,' Ned had told her, 'Cute and sorta harmless. I mean… look at it. Would you believe that tiny thing would ever grow up to be a crocodile? It must have been left here by some little kid who had it as a pet.'
She had stared at him, convinced that he was kidding, but he

seemed utterly serious and both Jack and Marcie were listening with perfectly straight faces as he went on.

'See?' Ned continued, 'A few years back, it was like a big fad back in New York. Al the pet shops were selling these little baby crocodiles, you know? You bought them for about a dollar fifty and put them in these little fish tank kind of things, like he used to do with turtles. And he'd feed him mealworms and little bits of hamburger and things like that. And it was kind of neat, like having a miniature dinosaur for a pet. You know? Only trouble was the cute little things got bigger and as they got bigger, they stopped being so cute. Started to look more like crocodiles, which is what they were, of course. And they started to get teeth. Lots of sharp little teeth that could inflict a pretty painful bite. People didn't think, you know? I mean, it looks like a cute little lizard but you'd think people would realize that they grow up to be crocodiles. Only they didn't. And like I say, it got to be a fad. All these little kids had had to have them because their friends had them.

'And like that and as they got bigger, they started to get nasty and bite the kids. And so the parents just took him and flushed him down the toilet like you would a dead goldfish. Except the baby crocodiles didn't die when they got flushed down the toilet. They went down into the sewer system under the city streets where it was warm and there was all sorts of garbage floating around for them to eat. And they just kept on getting bigger until there were these full-grown crocodiles down there, living in the sewer system, surviving on the garbage down there. The way people found out about it is that several workmen who went down there to work on the sewer pipes got killed. They'd be standing there in their waders, working on a pipe or something. And all of a sudden this log would come drifting up, only it wasn't a log. And the next thing they knew, it had a hold of them and was dragging them down underneath the filthy water. And that would be the last anyone would ever see of them. It got to be such a problem that the unions went on strike because none of the workmen wanted to go down there. The sewers being infested with full-grown crocodiles who would take your leg off with just one snap of their jaws, you know?

'The governor had to call in these special teams of navy frogmen to go down there and hunt the crocodiles. Only, it's hard to kill a crocodile with just a spear gun and there were so many of them down there that a lot of these Navy guys just got chewed to pieces. So then they called in the National Guard and what they did was go around the city and lift up every manhole cover they could find and drop hand grenades down there.'

Jack and Marcie couldn't hold it in any longer. They both started laughing and Brenda realized that she'd been had. Jack and Marcie, who both knew Ned from school, were used to him doing

things like that. He could tell the most outrageous stories with a straight face, just making them up as he went along; Seeing how far he could push it before people realized he was pulling their legs.

He was a real screwball that way, always goofing off, but the work that morning had gone a lot easier with him around, keeping things light. It hadn't taken him long to realize that Brenda was a sucker for a straight face and outrageous line. And she had immediately become his favorite mark, but she didn't really mind. He made her laugh. It was a big improvement over most of the guys she'd known who were always so concerned with coming on strong and cool to impress her. Ned's sense of humor impressed her much more than some guy cruising her like a macho jerk. She'd had more than her share of those.

She opened the door of the prefab storage shed and took out one of the straw archery butts. Earlier that morning, she'd slipped the new targets on over the straw butts and screwed the tripods together. So, now all she had to do was carry the targets onto the range. She picked up the target. It was awkward to carry, though not very heavy. She walked out to the range with it where she had already set up the tripods. She hung the target on the tripod and stepped back from it a pace, brushing a few stray pieces of straw off her shirt.

Suddenly, an arrow hissed right past her and thudded into the bullseye of the target, missing her by only about a foot. She gasped and turned to see Ned standing a short distance away, holding a bow and several arrows.

"Ta-da!" he sang out, giving her a little bow. She stared at him with disbelief.

"Are you crazy?"

"Want to see my trick shot?" he asked, grinning and fitting two arrows to the bow. "It's even better!"

"I don't believe you!"

He dropped his lip in a Bogart sneer.

"You know, you're beautiful when you're angry, sweetheart."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah," he replied.

"Did you come here to help me or scare me to death?"

She grabbed the arrow he had shot and went after him with it. He laughed, retreating from her in mock terror.

"Ned! If you do that again, I'm going to take you up on the wall to dry."

"God, I love it when you talk sexy!" he laughed.

She gave up. She just couldn't stay mad at him. Between the cornball lines and the ridiculous delivery, there was something about him that simply got to her. She didn't know what the hell it was. He was

like an unruly little kid. She wanted to grab him, pull down his pants and spank him.

'Pretty kinky, Bren,' she thought, 'That, or the guy's bringing out your maternal instincts. Watch out. Could be trouble. The guys really dangerous were the ones who could sneak in past your defenses and Ned was already halfway there.' She felt strongly attracted to him in spite of herself. He helped her finish hanging the targets then they went back to the cabins to change into their bathing suits and finish working on the dock.

Ned kept them all in stitches, doing his impression of Steve Christy as the camp commandant, waving his arms around and barking out orders as they pushed the last piece of dock into the water and secured it.

"All right, move it out there! A little to the right! A little to the left! Move it out! Move it out! Okay! A little to the left! No—a little… no, no! You're okay… no, a little to the right. Okay, now a little to the left!"

Marcie gave him a push and he went into the lake with a scream. Alice jumped in as well, followed by Brenda and by unspoken communal consent, all work ceased as of that moment whether Steve liked it or not. They were going to take a break. All of them had been working nonstop since they arrived and they deserved some time to themselves.

The sun was high and the water was cool and Steve Christy was in town, probably cleaning out the hardware store again and thinking of more things for them to do. They had accomplished a lot in one day and the rest could wait. Might as well cool off and catch some rays before it started to get dark.

Treading water by the dock, Brenda stared out across the lake. She thought she had seen something move on the other side. She grabbed hold of the dock and squinted hard at a stand of trees on the opposite shore.

"What's the matter?" Marcie asked. She was lying on the dock and now she stared in the same direction.

"Do you see something?"

"No," said Brenda, turning away with a shrug. "No, nothing."

She glanced back over her shoulder, frowning. All of a sudden, she had the strangest feeling they were being watched. She wasn't sure what had made her turn to look across the lake but for a moment, she thought she had seen a figure standing back there in the trees. Now there wasn't anybody there. There was only a tingling sensation at the back of her neck. 'It's probably Ned,' she thought, 'He's got me all jumpy with his sneaking up on people and all his talk of poisonous snakes and crocodiles in the lake.'

Something grabbed her leg. She screamed as Ned broke the

surface of the water right beside her, making snapping sounds with his jaws.

"Ned!"

"I'm getting to you!" He said, ominously.

Very slowly, she splashed him and he laughed and pushed off the dock. She made a face at Marcie.

Much as she hated to admit it, he was getting to her. Instead of being annoying, his juvenile behavior was sort of cute. He was like a little boy, throwing spit balls to get attention. It was like having Jerry Lewis getting a crush on you. It was both maddening and enduring at the same time. Marcie sighed and stood up. The sun was getting low and he still had a few things left to do.

"Hey, you guys," she said, "You ready to go back to work?"

Jack groaned and turned over on his stomach.

"Yeah…" said Bill, sounding considerably less than enthusiastic. "Come on, Alice."

"Uh oh," said Alice. She was staring at the water. Ned had swam a distance from the dock and he was suddenly thrashing weakly in the water.

"Help!" he shouted, "Help!"

"There's something wrong with Ned!" said Marcie.

They saw him go under.

"Get a life preserver!" Jack shouted.

Bill leaped in to the water and Jack dived in after him, both of striking out towards Ned. Marcie and Brenda pushed a boat into the water. Alice threw out a life preserver. Jack was treading water at the spot where they had seen Ned go down. Bill was underneath somewhere, looking for Ned. He came up beside Jack and took a deep breath.

"Did you see him?"

"I don't know… he's around here somewhere."

"I'm gonna help dive for him," said Alice. She went over the side of the canoe as Marcie paddled out to where Jack and Bill were looking.

"There he is!" cried Marcie, pointing. Brenda had come up with her arm around him. Ned was limp.

"Come on, guys. Help me!" she said, struggling to pull him towards the dock.

"Watch his head!" said Marcie. Alice was beside her in another moment and then Jack and Bill were helping to bring him in and lift him onto the dock. He appeared to be unconscious. They laid him down on his back, his head hanging to once side. Brenda crouched over him.

"Can you give him mouth-to-mouth?" said Jack.

"Yeah," said Brenda. She turned his head and opened his

mouth, putting one hand on his jaw and clamping the other over his nose. She checked to see if there was any obstructions in his mouth or if he had swallowed his tongue, took a deep breath, and placed her mouth over his, then exhaled slowly.

"Come on, Neddy," said Jack, bending over and staring head-on with concern.

"Come on… come on…"

Suddenly, Ned's arms came up to embrace Brenda and she felt his tongue enter her mouth as she pulled her down on top of him. She pushed away, slapping at him.

"Oh, Neddy!"

"Oh, Jesus Christ!" said Jack.

Marcie shook her head and rolled her eyes at Alice. Ned stared up at Brenda with a pouting expression on his face and she stared down at him, hands on her hips, angry with him, but also trying to suppress a giggle. She turned away so he wouldn't see her starting to lose the battle and just for a moment, she thought she caught another flicker of movement on the far side of the lake. 'There was someone watching them,' she thought, not really certain if she had glimpsed at a dark figure ducking back into the trees or if it was only a trick of the light or her imagination. Maybe it was nothing.

Maybe it was one of the Townies, hoping to catch them all skinny dipping and get a cheap thrill.

She looked back at Ned. The others had all gone back to change and Ned just sat there looking at her uncertainly. With that little boy-I-hope-she-isn't-really-mad expression on his face. She sighed.

"What do I see in this guy?' she asked herself. Now she was a little sorry she had pushed away from him so soon. It had been sort of nice. He got up, looking contrite. She shook her head.

"Oh, come on," she said, heading back toward the cabins. As they left the dock, she looked across the lake once more. She didn't see anything, but she couldn't shake the feeling that there was something there, watching; watching and waiting.

Chapter 3

Back inside her cabin, Alice stripped off her bathing suit and slipped into a robe. Steve still hadn't returned from town. So far, he'd spent the whole day running in every direction at once. He seemed more concerned with how things were going for the camp than how things were going with them.

'Give me a week,' he'd said. She wondered if a week would actually change anything. What could happen in a week? Well, maybe a lot could happen in a week if they really had a chance to talk. But then, they'd had a chance to talk last night and nothing had been settled.

She looked around at the cabin, figuring she could take it for another week. It really wasn't all that bad, but she could think of lots of places she'd rather be. Maybe even California but there were problems there as well. Two men in her life. Both nice men, but both with their own agendas to consider. Neither of them was willing to give up his own interests for hers, but each expected her to give up her interest for his sake. She wondered if she wouldn't be better off forgetting about both of them, but it wasn't all that easy. Nice men were hard to find and relationships were complicated.

She cared about them both. John and Steve were waiting for her to make a choice. The problem was she didn't know how to choose.

She brushed her hair and went over to the dresser, taking out some fresh underwear, a t-shirt, a clean pair of jeans. The trouble was, she wasn't sure what she really wanted. She didn't like the pressure. She couldn't think straight. Only one thing was clear: she wasn't about to settle down in the town of Crystal Lake. When Steve had spoken to her about the camp, he had talked about it as a piece of property he had inherited. An investment, not as a business he actually planned to run himself, nor did she expect to find herself drawn into it. She subsequently realized that Camp Crystal Lake was an albatross across Steve's neck. Somehow, he seemed to feel that it was something he had to atone for. The camp had been his father's downfall. It had ruined him. There had been problems. She knew that a little boy had died. Steve didn't like to talk about it. He wouldn't elaborate and the following year, something terrible had happened. An accident, Steve said, but the talk in town didn't sound as if whatever happened had been an accident. Why did they call the place 'Camp Blood?' One of the other kids… Ned? Or was it Bill? Had mentioned some killings that had occurred here. She had wanted to talk to Steve about it, but he was sensitive about the subject. She knew the moment she brought it up, he'd overreact. She thought it would probably help to talk about it,

but it was an extremely sore subject with him. She sighed.

How can you hope to have a relationship with someone who avoids things? You can't solve problems by pretending they aren't there and the camp was a real problem with Steve. He was obsessed with making it a success. If he devoted as much energy to his relationship, maybe she wouldn't be thinking of going back to California. Part of her wanted to leave and just be by herself for a while. To think things out. And part of her kept hoping he'd give her more of a reason to stay. As she shut the drawer, she felt something smooth brush by her foot. She jerked it back and looked down to see a large, black snake slithering underneath the dresser. She jumped back and screamed.

"Bill!"

Bill was just outside the cabin, clearing out some brush with a machete when he heard Alice scream.

He took off toward her cabin at a run.

"Bill! Come here! Quick! Hurry!"

He came running through the door, holding the machete.

"What is it?"

"There's a snake over there!" she shrieked, backing against the door.

"Where?"

She pointed at the dresser.

"What do I do?" he said.

"Kill it!"

He glanced uneasily toward the dresser, but he couldn't see the snake.

"It might bite," he said uneasily, holding the machete out before him.

"Haven't you ever been in the woods?" said Alice.

"We're not in the woods!"

Jack burst in, startled by the screams. He was carrying a shovel. Marcie was right on his heels. Jack stopped when he saw Bill, poised with the machete.

"Jesus, Bill what are you doing?"

Ned and Brenda rushed in, breathless.

"What is it?" Ned asked.

"There's a snake in here," warned Bill, Crouching and looking all around, as if expecting it to come charging at him. He knew snakes could move very quickly.

"Why are we in here?" Marcie said.

Alice screamed and pointed as she spotted the snake slithering under the bed.

"There it is!"

"Woah!" shouted Ned, seeing the size of it.
"Feet, don't fail me now!"
"I can't sleep with a snake in here!" said Alice.
Bill jumped on the bed, holding the machete up high but he lost sight of the snake.
"Nobody told us anything about snakes!" said Brenda, fearfully.
"Kill it!" Alice said, holding on to Ned's arm.
"You heard the lady," Ned said.
"I can't get it until it comes out," said Bill, looking cautiously beneath the bed.
"Well… call him!" Alice said.
Bill gave her a wry look. "How do you call a snake?"
Jack held up the shovel and worked his way around the bed.
"I'll flush it out!"
He brought the shovel down and thrust it under the bed and then jumped back, dropping the shovel and knocking over the night stand. The girls screamed. They saw the snake's tail disappearing beneath the fallen nightstand and both Jack and Bill jumped back like reluctant hunters stalking a dangersous prey. Brenda screamed out and clutched Marcie as the snake shot out from the nightstand and wiggled back toward the dresser. Jack swung a pillow at it and the feathers flew as the seams on the pillow split. Bill hacked at the floor with his machete.
"I got it! I got it!"
"Kill it!"
"I got 'em!"
Thwack.
The machete thunked onto the floor, chopping the head off the snake. Bill brought it down twice more for good measure.
"Is it dead?" whispered Alice, swallowing hard.
"Either that or it's got a very short clone," said Ned.
Alice made a sound of disgust.
"Well," sighed Marcie, "At least we know what's for dinner."
"Uhhh…" Brenda moaned with disgust, picking up a pillow and swinging it hard at Marcie's head as the girl ducked.
"Marcie!" said Alice.
"How gross!" said Ned.
Bill picked up the pieces of the snake with the machete and threw them out the door into the bushes. The girl who'd been hired to cook still hadn't arrived so they were left to their own devices for supper. Steve Christy still hadn't returned. Alice reminded them that he said he would be back sometime that evening, so they decided not to wait for him. They trooped into the kitchen to check out supplies. Brenda found some greens in the refrigerator.

"I'm making salad," she announced, "Do you want me to go ahead and make some for everybody?"

"That'd be great," said Marcie.

They had all worked up an appetite and nobody felt like sandwiches and chips again.

"Oh, and I think there's some hamburger in there too."

"Nothing for me, thank you," said Brenda, who was a vegetarian. She made a face at the thought of eating red meat.

"There are some apples though. You know how to make apple pie?"

"Oh, sure," Marcie said, "No sweat."

They heard the sound the rumbling sound of a big motorcycle approaching. Brenda glanced out the window.

"Uh oh," she said, "Look who's coming."

They went outside and watched Officer Dorf pulling up on his big Harley, having a little trouble steering it over the rutted dirt road. He looked like authority, incarnate and his freshly pressed and sharply creased uniform, his spit-shined riding boots, his police helmet, leather gauntlets and mirrored shades. He pulled up to the front of the cabin and dismounted, leaning the big Harley on its side stand and looking them over as only a cop looks people over as potential perpetrators. Ned chose that unfortunate moment to be Ned.

He bounded out from behind the cabin shirtless and wearing an Indian headdress he had found among the camp supplies. Bart of a box full of Indian headbands, beads, and vests Steve had panned to use for teaching the campers Indian dances.

Whooping like Crazy Horse descending upon Custer, Ned came out, prancing, doing his version of a rain dance which looked something halfway between a man walking barefoot on hot rocks and Michael Jackson on catnip. Intent upon his performance, he didn't notice Dorf until he pranced right up to him and found himself staring at his own reflection in Dorf's mirrored shades. He came to a dead halt and gulped.

"Oh shit."

Dorf took off his shades with a dramatic flourish.

"All right," he said, giving Ned a strange look, "Who are you?"

"Camp counselors," said Brenda, "Ah, Neddie's just fooling around."

"Yeah, right," Ned added quickly, "I'm just fooling around."

"Can it, Cochise," said Dorf, "Steve Christy hire you people?"

"That's right," Brenda replied.

"He pay you for this?"

Brenda nodded. 'No, we're doing this for free, you dork,' she thought.

Jack came walking over to the Harley, checking it out.

"Hey, nice bike."

Dorf put his hands out, stopping Jack before he could get any closer. Dorf didn't like people touching his motorcycle. He used to have a sticker on the gas tank that said "If you value your life as much as I value this bike, don't mess with it" but the sheriff made him take it off. The sheriff was always making him take things off his bike. Once, Dorf had bought a special leather shotgun case that strapped to the front forks and he had slipped a riot gun into it but the sheriff made him take that off as well.

'You're not a Rooster Cogburn, Dorf,' the Sheriff had said with a world-weary tone, 'You're a police officer. You're supposed to patrol the town on that thing and write up speeders, not case down stagecoach riders.' Dorf didn't think the sheriff understood about projecting authority. Not only did the sheriff never shine his boots, he didn't even wear regulation police boots. He wore red wing work shoes. The oil leather kind that didn't take a shine. One time, Dorf had heard about a special charity program in New York that bought bulletproof vests for the police and he had used department stationary to apply for four vests for the Crystal Lake police force. The sheriff had returned them with a letter of apology.

'I don't really think we need them, Dorf,' he had said, 'Cassidy and Sundance havn't been through here in years.'

Dorf was often frustrated in this maner when all he was trying to do was bring some snap and polish to the force. He knew that a strong police prescene was essential to crime prevention and he knew it worked. There hadn't been much crime at all in Crystal Lake since he had joined the force two years ago. There hadn't been much crime in Crystal Lake before he joined the force either, but that was hardly the point. He fixed Jack with a hard stare.

"You been smokin', boy?"

"Smokin?" Jack said, raising his eyebrows. He grinned

"Don't smoke. It causes cancer you know what I mean?"

Dorf squinted at him. He thought it made him look mean. Instead, it just made him look near sighted.

"What? Did you just get off a space ship or something? Colombian gold, man. Grass. Hash. Weed. Dig it?"

Ned glanced at Brenda.

"What's he talking about?"

"Hey, don't get smart," snapped Dorf.

"Me?" Ned asked innocently, "I'm as dumb as they come."

"Hey!" said Dorf, pointing at him, "Not another word out of you, understand?"

"Officer," Marcie started.

"Officer, really—"Brenda said at the same time, "There's nothing going on here. We're just trying to get the place in shape."

"In shape for what?" said Dorf.

Brenda rolled her eyes. Bill approached him, speaking politely.

"Officer, is there anything we can do to help?"

"We'd be glad to help out," said Marcie.

Dorf glanced at them all suspiciously.

"I'm looking for somebody."

"Yeah," said Bill, "Who's that?"

"A guy named Ralph," Dorf replied, "Town Crazy."

Ned laughed.

"Well hey, no crazy people around here."

Dorf poked him in the chest with his index finger.

"I told you to sit on it, Tonto. Now, I got word that Ralph was pedaling out this way, spouting his gospel."

"We haven't seen anybody here, Officer," said Bill.

"Just us," Marcie added.

"Uh… this guy, Ralph," said Brenda, "Is he dangerous?" She was thinking about the figure she thought she'd seen back at the lake, watching.

"Every time that loony gets drunk, said Dorf, "He gets callin', I end up spending the morning in court and he gets a week in jail." The speaker mounted on the handlebars of the motorcycle crackled as the dispatcher's voice came over the radio.

"Cycle 2—Cycle 2—where are you? Come in Cycle 2—Cycle 2."

Jack picked up the mic but Dorf instantly snatched it from him and pushed him back, giving him a stern look.

"This is Dorf. I'm out here at Camp Crystal lake, over."

"Well get back in, Dorf," the radio blasted, "Sheriff wants you back in town on the double."

"Roger that," said Dorf into the mic, "That's a 10-4, on my way out."

He turned to the group. "Never keep the Sheriff waiting." He hitched up his pistol belt, "You kids keep your noses clean, you understand? You'll be hearing from me if you don't."

He made eye contact with each of them. "We ain't gonna stand for no weirdness out here." He nodded for emphasis. He put his shades back on, threw his leg over the bike and punched the electric starter. The Harley rumbled to life and he blipped the throttle several times, staring at them through his mirrored shades. He wished he could pull a doughnut, locking up the front break and shifting into gear, giving a lot of throttle so the rear wheel could slide around in a 180. But the last time he'd tried that, he had dropped the bike on its side in

front of Harlan's hardware store and he had to ask Harlan to come out and help him pick it up. He still hadn't heard the end of that one. He carefully eased the bbike around over the ruts and gave it some gas. The rear wheel spun in the dirt and he almost lost it but he managed to save himself at the last instant and he shot off down the road.

They laughed as they watched Dorf ride off into the sunset. Ned walked back toward the cabin in an exaggerated version of John Wayne's rolling gait inject tossed off a salute at Dorf's back. Marcie and Brenda shook their heads and went back into the cabin. Alice had missed the show. She had come in from the storage shed with a sack of pots and pans so they could start on dinner. She set them down on the table and went into the back room. The pantry. She opened the door and jumped back with a scream as Ralph stepped out, leering at her insanely.

"I'm a messenger of God!" he cried, coming at her with his hand raised. She backed up against the stove as Marcie and Ned came running in, hearing her scream. They pulled up short at the sight of Ralph standing like an animated scarecrow and staring wildly at them.

"You're doomed if you stay here!" Ralph said, "This place is cursed! Cursed!"

Ned and Marcie glanced at each other uneasily.

"It's got a death curse!" Ralph said. His eyes wide.

"Who are you?" Alice asked, staying well out of his reach.

"What do you want?" said Marcie, moving behind Ned.

"God sent me," Ralph answered.

"Get out of here, man," Ned hoped he didn't sound as frightened as he felt.

"I got to warn ya!" Ralph said, moving toward them.

Ned sidled away from the door, giving him a clear path and hoping he would take it. Ralph stared at each of them, his eyes bulging.

"You're doomed if you stay! Go! Goooo…" he suddenly lurched past Ned and went out the cabin door, hurrying away without a backward look. Ned watched him go, then took a deep breath.

"I think we just met Ralph."

"God," said Alice, putting her hand to her forehead, "What's next?" She looked out the door and saw Ralph approaching on his riggedy old bicycle.

"You're all doomed!" he shouted at them as he pedaled down the same road Dorf had taken moments ago, "You're all doomed!"

Chapter 4

They debated calling the police about Ralph, but it was a very short debate. Ned pointed out that they'd probably just send out Dorf again. And if was a case of putting up with Ralph or Dorf, they'd probably be better off with Dorf. In any case, 'the mad prophet of Crystal Lake,' as Ned had christened him, seemed to have vacated the premises and they had decided to forget about it. Jack especially wasn't anxious to give Dorf any reason to search through their belongings. He decided he should probably give some serious thought to finding a safe place for his stash, just in case.

They started dinner with Brenda tossing a salad and Jack frying hamburgers. It had been a long day and they were all starved. The clouds started rolling in as Steve had predicted and it looked as if it was going to storm.

"Who likes 'em rare?" Jack called from the grill.

"Me!" said Marcie.

Brenda made a face and shuddered.

"How can you guys eat that stuff?" she said, "It looks like dead animals."

"Dead animals?" Ned looked her in mock disgust, "That's old counselors. You cannibals!"

"Well," said Brenda, serving the salad, "if you would mix all this stuff right, you get all the protein you need."

"Too bad Annie never showed up," said Bill, raising the top half of his bun and peering dubiously at his hamburger, "She was supposed to be quite a good cook."

"Yeah, but don't expect me to play chef to you guys," said Marcie.

"Uh oh," groaned Ned, "The squaws are revolting."

Marcie threw a bun at him. It was starting to get dark as the storm approached and Alice reached up to pull the string attached to the light fixture. The light didn't come one. She pulled the string several times with no result.

"Trouble?" Bill said.

"Yeah," said Alice, "Either a bad bulb or no power. Seems a little gloomy in here."

"Steve taught me how to use the emergency generator," said Jack, "The town power lines are supposed to be real lousy."

"God, don't you love that macho talk?" Joked Ned. He lowered his voice. "Emergency generator."

Jack wished he'd give it a rest. The more he was around Brenda, the sillier Ned got. It had become obvious to everyone that Ned really liked her but he was acting like a little kid. If Brenda had

pigtails, Ned would probably be following her around with an inkpot.

"You want to give me a hand?" Jack asked Bill, shaking his head in resignation.

"yeah, let's go." Bill rose from the table.

"Wait for me," said Brenda.

"Neddie, can you watch the burgers?" Jack said.

"Sure."

"Burn 'em." Brenda grimaced.

Alice handed Ned some buns.

"You want to heat these?"

"Yeah," said Ned, making a big production out of rearranging all the burgers on the grill, flourishing the spatula like a conductor leading an orchestra. Alice sighed. Maybe Ned was being a bit juvenile but at least he didn't keep his feelings secret. If Brenda held up a hoop, he'd undoubtedly jump through it. There was something to be said about that puppy-like infatuation. It was sort of cute and she could tell that Brenda was responding to it. She wished Steve would be a bit more demonstrative. He was always so serious, so intense. She wished he'd lighten up a little. One would think from the way he acted that everything at Camp Crystal Lake was a matter of life or death.

Bill shut the door behind them as Brenda switched on the flashlight, aiming it at the old gasoline powered generator. The wind was starting to pick up outside. All they needed now was a power failure just as a storm was about to hit.

"You really think he's going to be bent out of shape?" Brenda asked as Jack approached the generator.

"I don't know," said Jack. They weren't looking forward to Steve's reaction when he learned there was something wrong with the power lines. Throughout the day, he'd been obsessive about every little detail of each job they had done. Running into town to pick up more supplies every few hours, making up new lists of things for them to do, checking on their work when he got back and finding fault with everything. None of them looked forward to sitting out a storm in a cabin without any lights, listening to Steve complaining about all the things they hadn't done.

Bill scanned the interior of the cabin, the oldest one in the camp. It needed too much renovation to be useful as a dorm for the campers, so Steve had designed it as the plant cabin, the one where they kept all the tools and emergency supplies.

"Hey," said Bill, glancing at the generator. "This looks almost like the one at my uncle's cabin in Maine."

"What an antique!" said Brenda.

"Well, here goes." Said Jack, priming it.

He threw the switch, kicked it over and it sputtered to life,

making a sound like an outboard motor about to throw a rod.

"What hath God wrought?" Brenda watched the generator shudder on its mounts as if it were alive.

Jack dusted off his palms and stepped back from it, watching it dubiously. He wouldn't have been surprised if it shook itself apart, but it seemed to work. They went outside and looked at the sky. It was a cloudy blue-grey. The wind had died down and everything was still, as if waiting for the storm to break. The surface of the lake was mirror smooth.

Marcie came out to join them. Jack took her hand. Everything seemed quiet and peaceful. It was nice having the camp to themselves for a while. No campers to watch over yet. No nervous camp director to badger them about their work every time they stopped to take a break. Jack led Marcie down the lake shore, past the dock and towards the woods. The walked across some fallen logs then stopped in a little stand of trees, sheltered from the others. Marcie smiled and came into his arms. They kissed.

Ned stood by a tree on a path between the cabins, watching them. He could just barely see them through the trees. He smiled and whistled softly between his teeth, thinking about Brenda. He always felt a little awkward around girls he liked. He knew he acted a bit foolish, but he couldn't really help himself and Brenda didn't seem to mind; she actually seemed to like him.

He sighed and started walking back to the cabin. He shared with Jack. As he approached, he thought he saw someone standing on the porch, looking out where Jack and Marcie stood kissing in the trees.

"Hello?" he said.

Whoever it was moved quickly back into the shadows. Ned hesitated, thinking about crazy old Ralph.

He had seen harmless enough, just a skinny old guy with crazy eyes, not much to him at all but you never could tell with crazy people. Yet, if Ralph were really dangerous, he doubted that the local police would allow him to run around loose. Just the town character, he thought, but he didn't like the idea of Ralph being in their cabin, going through their things. He hurried toward the cabin, but whoever had been on the porch had gone inside. He heard the door creak. He paused at the steps leading to the porch, took a deep breath then started up. He paused again outside the door.

"Can I help you?" He said. He rolled his eyes. 'Can I help you?' What was he, a sales clerk in a convenience store? Christ… 'Be firm, Ned!' He told himself, 'Get in there and chase the old loony out before he steals something.'

He stepped in and scanned the cabin. There wasn't anyone in

sight.

"Hello? Hel-o?" He heard a step behind him but before he could turn around, someone grabbed a handful of his hair and gave a hard, sharp jerk. His head snapped back and he opened his mouth to cry out but before he could utter a sound, a gleaming steel blade flashed briefly in front of his eyes and he felt a line of fire burn across his neck. A searing, stinging white-hot pain as the knife slashed his throat from ear to ear. His legs gave way beneath him and he coughed, choking on the flood of blood, trying in vain to gasp for air. Everything seemed to turn incredibly indescribably bright for a brief instant and then he felt himself falling. He was dead before he hit the floor.

Jack lit the way before them with a flashlight as he and Marcie ran back to the cabin. The wind had picked up again, sending the clouds scuttling across the sky and churning the surface of the lake into whitecaps.

"Come on," gasped Marcie, running ahead of him, trying to catch her breath.

The flashlight beam bounced crazily as Jack ran to keep up with her.

"I'm coming, I'm coming…"

He made it up the hill and paused, breathing bard.

"Whoo! Woah! Wind's come up." He shifted a good 180 degrees.

"Makes me want to hold onto you." Marcie smiled, coming into his arms. Jack kissed her long and hard then looked into her eyes. His cabin was right behind them and everyone else was back in the main cabin cleaning up after dinner. He looked toward the darkened cabin behind them then back at Marcie. She watched him silently for a moment.

"What about Ned?" she asked.

"I don't love Ned," Jack said, "Besides, he was sure Ned would be back at the main cabin, mooning over Brenda. They'd been talking about breaking out one of the games and maybe smoking a few. He didn't think Ned would be coming back to their cabin anytime soon. Marcie laughed.

"He keeps acting like such a jerk."

"Neddie!" Jack shouted, though not loud enough for anyone in the main cabin to hear over the wind.

"Stop it!" Marcie said, "Don't call him!"

Her eyes were steady on his.

"I thought you wanted to give him one of your motherly lectures," Jack said, trying not to think about how much he wanted her.

"Look, Neddie's gonna do whatever Neddie wants to do, you know?"

"Oh, its gonna storm." He moistened his lips. "It can tear down that valley like a son-of-a-gun."

As if to punctuate his comment, thunder rolled just beyond the valley. The storm was approaching fast. They sat down on a log and Marcie scooted closer to him.

"I've been afraid of storms ever since I was a little kid," she said.

"No, really?"

She laughed slightly, embarrassed.

"Yeah, I've had this dream where I'm in a thunderstorm and it's raining really hard. It… it sounds like pebbles when it hits the ground. I can hear it and I try to block out the sound with my hands over my ears only it doesn't work. It just keeps getting louder and louder and then the rain turns to blood… and—and the blood washes away in little rivers and the sound stops."

She shook her head and shivered as drops began to splatter around them.

"It's just a dream," said Jack.

"Yeah, I know." Marcie grimaced. "I'll call it my shower dream."

Lightning flashed. Jack laughed.

"Hey… this is no dream. Come on, we're gonna get soaked."

He led her into the cabin as the wind whipped across the lake, bending the treetops. He turned off the flashlight as they entered the cabin. They were alone in the dark. Marcie pushed up against him, kissed him seductively and slowly started to unbutton his shirt. Jack shut his eyes and swallowed. It seemed like it had been building up to this for a long, long time but he had never thought it would happen. He couldn't believe how much he wanted her. He thought about the conversation he once had with Neddie. 'Just because you want something, doesn't necessarily mean you should have it,' he had said.

Now, here he was with Marcie in the dark in an empty cabin on a secluded lake with thunder crashing and lightning flashing in the sky, and Marcie was afraid of thunderstorms. He remembered somewhere that some women were excited by thunderstorms and by fear. Was he taking advantage of the situation? No, he told himself. She's ready. She's making the choice. He had waited. He had never pressured her. He had allowed her to make the decision, to pick the right time and place.

He ran his hands over her breasts. Her nipples were hard. She broke the kiss and made her way over to the bottom bunk, feeling her way in the dark. He sat down beside her and reached over to the night stand, picking up a small candle and lighting it. She unbuttoned her jeans and pulled them down. She was wearing white bikini panties. He was afraid to speak—afraid to break the spell—afraid she'd changed

her mind at the last minute. He'd die if that happened.

Alice pulled back the curtain and peered out the window of the main cabin. The storm was making the surface of the lake boil. It was raining so hard, it sounded like hail hitting the roof.

"Jack and Marcie are gonna get drenched!" she said.

Bill smiled. "Not if they're where I think they are."

He plucked a few chords on the guitar. They had the fire going and it was warm and cozy inside. A pleasant place to relax after a hard day's work. Alice threw another log on the fire and sank into a chair and stretched out, sighing contentedly.

"Hmmm… that's nice."

"Mhmm…" Brenda nodded. She glanced up suddenly with a sly smile.

"Hey, I know what we can do. We're gonna play Monopoly."

Alice groaned.

"I hate monopoly."

"Not the way I play, you don't," said Brenda, grinning as she took the game down off the shelf.

"Like what?" said Bill, putting down the guitar.

Brenda started to take the game out of the box and spread it out on the table.

"We're going to play strip monopoly. I'm gonna be the shoe." She picked out her game token.

"You have got to be kidding," said Alice. Brenda shook her head.

"Uh-huh."

Bill raised his eyebrows, intrigued by the thought.

"What if Steve walks in?"

"Uh, we'll give him a handicap," Brenda replied quickly, "He can keep his boots on. Everything else goes. Now, it's easy: Instead of paying rent, you pay clothes. Bill can be the banker." She glanced at him, coyly. "Unless of course he's chicken."

Alice laughed, thinking it might be fun. Bill grinned and joined Brenda at the table.

"I guess I'm game, but heaven help you if you land in one of my hotels."

"Alice, why don't you see if Marcie left any of that grass," Brenda suggested.

Bill started to sort out the play money.

"What happened to my 500's?"

"They're right there," Brenda said, pushing them toward him. She looked around at the cluttered surface of the table.

"What happened to my shoe?"

Jack and Marcie lay naked in the bed together, moving slowly,

exploring one another's bodies, speaking in sighs and moans of pleasure. They had each given in to the feelings of the moment with no thought for the consequences. Rain pattered on the cabin roof. Wind whistled past the windows.

Thunder rolled and lightning flashed. The soft, flickering light from the candle on the nightstand illuminated only their one small corner of the cabin. Shadows danced across their bodies. The rest of the room was plunged in darkness. A darkness that had enveloped Ned as he lay lifeless on the bunk above. His throat slashed, his eyes wide open, seeing nothing. His blood seeping into the mattress.

And there was something else inside that darkened cabin with them. A hate that seized with mindless fury, raging for revenge. Waiting to reach out and take it. It was close, so very close, merely a breath away.

Alice set the open beers on the table, then sat down and lit up a joint, inhaling deeply.

"I'm not going to pass Go without a glow," she giggled. Brenda laughed.

"We've already rolled for you. You're going last, okay? And community chest can't give you back your clothes."

She rolled the dice.

"Double 6's. I get to roll again."

Bill snipped his beer and glanced at Alice.

"I think we're being hustled."

"I think you're right," said Alice, leaning back in her chair and taking another toke before passing the joint to Bill.

'Steve wouldn't approve of this,' she thought,' if he came in now, he'd put a stop to it and give them all a lecture on responsibility.' She sighed. He'd think this was juvenile, silly, but it wouldn't hurt him to be a little silly and juvenile on occasion, even a little irresponsible. If he kept pushing himself like this, he'd wind up with an ulcer and she certainly wouldn't be around to see it. She'd be dozen in the California sun.

He'd been so different when she met him. Gentle. Compassionate. Attentive. Or had she only seen what she had wanted to see? It wasn't that he was unkind, or that he took her for granted. It was just that he was too wrapped up in his plans to the point of obsession. He simply wasn't able to see what was really happening around him. Perhaps it was her fault. Perhaps she should have seen it coming.

Maybe there was something about her that led her to make the same mistakes with men over and over. She had been vulnerable when she met him, trying to get over the breakup of a relationship that hadn't been going anywhere. She had told John that she had needed

time away from him for awhile to think, time to herself, and then along came Steve who seemed so very different, so much more relaxed and easy going.

Now, she was stuck in the same rut all over again. It was one thing to have plans, to have ambitions, goals, but it was something else entirely when those goals and ambitions took over and blocked out everything else. Her father had been like that and she had seen what it had done to her mother.

Her father had been a commodities broker. He had started out with nothing, determined to make a good life for his family. He had worked like a dog, putting in long hours at the office and bringing work home with him. Always on the telephone, always with his nose stuck in the Wall Street Journal, caught up in his dream. There was nothing wrong with pursuing a dream, she thought. There was nothing wrong with planning for the future, but you couldn't live in the future. You had to take time out to appreciate the present. Then her father started spending more time at the office than at home. Breakfast with the family became gulped coffee while he scanned the market reports.

Conversations over dinner on those rare occasions when he came home in time for it became absent grunts and nods while his mind was somewhere else, on work. Always the work. He never spoke of anything else. Alice had watched her mother becoming more and more withdrawn. More and more alienated from her husband's world. There was never any time for vacations. There was no time for going out to dinner, or the movies, or playing with the kids on the weekends, or just cooling up in front of the fireplace with a glass of wine and a good book.

Occasionally, there had been time for argument with her mother, pleasing that he shouldn't work so hard and her father insisting that he was doing it all for them, so that they could have a better life. It was always the dream of the better life, never the thought that life just might be good enough the way it was if he could only take time out to enjoy it. But he couldn't seem to find the time. That time kept drifting into the future and finally, there was no time left. Like a clock with a mainspring wound too tight, her father had finally snapped. He had died of a coronary. They had found him, slumped over his office desk. A telephone receiver in either hand. He had literally worked himself to death and his heart had burst.

Alice was never going to go through with that ever again. She didn't want any part of men who became so caught in their plans and ambitions that she would up being pushed aside. You don't work for a relationship, she thought, you work at it and that meant communicating. It meant sharing. It meant not putting things off until some other time where it would me more convenient. That time might

never arrive. When Steve came back, she was going to have to confront him with it. Maybe if she explained to him why she felt the way she did, he'd understand. Maybe then he'd open up and talk about it, instead of avoiding the subject which he always did. It was almost as if he was afraid to talk about it. She had seen the curious change come over him as they had driven up to the lake. She had seen him grow tense and moody. As they approached the camp, he had stopped the Jeep at the entrance, his mouth a thin line as he simply sat and stared through the windshield at the empty cabins on the lakeshore. Like an old soldier revisiting a battlefield.

'What is it, Steve?' she had asked him.

For a long moment, he said nothing.

'Steve?'

He had blinked as if coming out of a daze and turned to look at her, a forced smile on his face.

'Nothing,' He said, 'Just thinking about all the work we have to do, that's all.'

But that wasn't all. She knew there was something else. Something he wouldn't tell her. There was a sense of desperation about him, as if he were frightened of something. What was he so afraid of? He acted as if it were all a matter of life and death.

They lay next to one another, bodies touching, basking in the warm afterglow of sex. Marcie turned on her side and kissed Jack softly on his cheek.

"Mmmm…" she sighed, "You are so fine."

She gave him another kiss and got out of bed. The candle on the nightstand was flickering.

"Yo, where're you going?" Jack said, sitting up.

"I gotta pee." She felt around in the darkness for her clothes. Jack put on his shirt. Marcie found her underpants and t-shirt, pulled them on, and then slipped onto her raincoat without bothering to look for the rest of her clothes. They were nearby on the floor, somewhere, and she would only be gone a minute.

"Hurry back, okay?" Jack grinned, "It's getting cold in here."

"You'll save my place for me?"

"Oh, yeah."

She bent down to kiss them, then picked up the flashlight and went out the door. It was pouring. She smiled at the thought of what would happen if she ran into any of the others and they saw her barefoot in the rain, without anything on beneath her slicker except her underwear. But the light was still on in the main cabin and she could see smoke curling up from the chimney. They're probably having their own party, she thought.

Alice rolled the dice.

"Five."

She moved her playing token.

"Baltic Avenue. I'll buy it."

"No one ever lands on Baltic Avenue," Bill pointed out.

"I think it's a pretty color," Alice said.

She passed Bill the play money and he handed her the deed card.

"Okay," he said, rattling the dice in his hand and blowing on them like a craps shooter.

"Come on," said Alice.

He rolled the dice.

"Ha! Eight."

Alice moved his token around the board.

"Baltic Avenue! You owe me one boot. Hand it over."

"Coming."

He reached under the table to pull off his boot.

"Alice draws first blood," said Brenda.

"What a terrible way to talk about my feet," said Bill. He passed her the boot.

"Thank you," said Alice, setting it down beside her chair. They were all starting to get a little silly.

The grass was helping, so was the beer.

"You know, I think I'm beginning to like this game. Just wait till you land on my old Kentucky home," Brenda threatened. She rolled the dice.

"More beer?" asked Bill. He quickly checked the bottles on the table.

"More beer."

He nodded and got up to go to the refrigerator.

"Let's see," said Brenda, "What railroad is that?"

Jack lit up a joint and waved the match out, flicking it onto the floor. He drew the smoke in deeply and exhaled as he lay back on the bed. He thought about Marcie. He wondered if she was taking birth control pills. He wondered why he hadn't wondered about that before. It was a little late to ask himself that now. Suppose she got pregnant. Surely she was on the pill, wasn't she? She wouldn't have sex if she weren't on the pill, thought Jack. But then, on the other hand, he had sex and he hadn't used a condom. Why wasn't that the same? Wasn't it being sexist to expect her to take full responsibility for them both being protected? Was it fair to justify by telling himself that he got carried away? What with the thunder and the lightning getting her excited and the dark romantic cabin and being all alone out in the woods. Her being so near and touching him and looking up at him like

that. He reassured himself that he had never pressured her, that she had made the choice. But what if she got pregnant? What then? They had never discussed that possibility. Would she consider having an abortion? How did she feel about that? Jack didn't even know how she felt about that.

On the one hand, it was her body and ultimately her choice. But on the other hand, he would have been a part of it as well. It wasn't something they had ever discussed. Suppose she got pregnant and decided to have the baby? What then? Marriage? Okay. He loved her, no question about that. He also believed in doing the right thing. He could probably get a transfer to her school. Well, come to think about it, she probably wouldn't be able to go to school, certainly for a while and he'd have to get a job. They'd both probably have to get jobs. Could they balance school and jobs and caring for the baby? Daycare was expensive. So were diapers. Clothes. Baby food. Medical insurance. And all right, maybe there wasn't any question that they loved each other, but were they ready to take a step that big?

'How come we never talked about this shit before?' Jack wondered. It wasn't that he'd felt guilty about what they had done. There wasn't anything wrong with that. They loved each other. They had waited until the time seemed right. It wasn't as if he had just torn off a piece only for the sake of getting laid, but this was Marcie. Someone he really cared about. But if you really care about someone, Jack thought, you communicate with them. You find out how they feel about things. You talk things out. Why was it so difficult to talk about sex? Oh, it wasn't hard at all to talk about it with other guys like Neddie. But why did it seem awkward to sit down and just discuss it in a non-threatening way with a girl you cared about. For that matter, he thought, why couldn't a bunch of us just sit down together and talk about it, just between ourselves? A nice friendly loose discussion. Find out how we feel about things. Bounce ideas off of each other.

He imagined himself walking up to the other guys some night, like maybe tomorrow night when they were gathered around a campfire having a few beers. Maybe smoking a few and saying 'Hey, what do you say we talk about sex?

Of course, they probably laugh. So would he if Neddie had said something like that. But after they had laughed and laughing was good to break the tension, he could tell them he was serious. That he wasn't saying that they should talk about you know, doing it, but how they really felt about it, what concerns they had about relationships and things like that. Why couldn't they talk about things like that in a serious, sharing sort of way? Right then, he decided he was going to have a long talk with Marcie that night. That, instead of just jumping back into bed with each other and picking up where they left off, as

much as he wanted to do it again. They were going to talk first, really talk and find out how they felt about things, about their plans, and how they truly felt about each other. You shouldn't just let your feelings take control, he thought. They'd just been physically intimate with one another and it was past time they got mentally intimate as well. Maybe nothing would change.

There had been a strong sense of inevitability about this ever since they knew they would be moving on to different schools, meeting new people, probably forming new relationships. The tension had been there. It was something they both felt but they never really talked about it. It seemed they both knew it would happen and it also seemed that they both knew it would happen sometime this summer. It was a large part of why they decided to take jobs at the camp together, so they could get away and be by themselves before their paths took them in different directions. Deep down, maybe they both knew that after this summer it would be over for them. It didn't really have to be, but it would be hard to keep things going with all the changes that were coming. They had to go for it while there was still time, but they had never talked.

'You gotta go for it!' one of Jack's friends at school had said when they discussed their girlfriends one evening in a locker room after basketball practice.

'I mean, you gotta ask yourself,' Jack's friend had said, 'What are you waiting for?

'I'm waiting for it to be right,' Jack replied.

'Yeah, you could wait forever that way,' warned his friend.

'I don't want to pressure Marcie,' Jack said.

'Did it ever occur to you that maybe she's waiting for you to make the move?'

'Yeah, sure. I thought about it but—'

'But what? You're gonna to be going to State. Marcie's gonna be going to Boston. You think she's not gonna meet new guys up there? You think you're not gonna meet new girls?'

'Well, If that's the way it's gonna be, then maybe we shouldn't do it, you know? I mean, if it's not gonna lead to anything…'

'Who says its not gonna lead to something? What are you sayin? You wanna get married? For Christ's sake. You wanna wind up sittin' all alone in your college dorm some night and thinking about what might have been? Al right, so you're waiting for her. I can understand that I guess, but you ever think that maybe she might be getting tired of waiting for you? You gotta go for it man. Life's too short.'

Jack took another long drag on the joint. Maybe his friend was right. Well, the tension was over now.

They done it and it had been great. Better than could ever have imagined and he didn't feel sorry that they'd done it. No sorrier than he felt that they'd waited. But doing it had been the easy part.

They had opened their bodies up to each other but that was only part of it. Maybe it was corny but he felt it was time for them to open up their hearts as well. Way past time. You gotta for that, Jack thought, If you really want making love to mean something, if you really want it to be making love rather than just screwing. He felt really close to Marcie now and he wanted to feel closer. They had to talk about it. Life was too short.

Something dripped down onto his forehead.

'What the hell?' he thought, 'Don't tell me the damn roof looks'. But Neddie's mattress was directly above him, not the roof. He wiped his forehead and squinted at his fingers in the light from the flickering candle. His fingers were streaked with red.

"What the—"

Something moved beneath him and before he had time to react, an arm flashed out from underneath the bed and he felt a strong hand clamp down on him. Powerful fingers pressed his head against the pillow, pinning him down and even as he gasped and jerked, startled, something pricked the back of his head. Something that came up from beneath the bed, pushing through the mattress.

Pain suddenly shocked through him as the razor sharp hunting arrow ripped through his throat. The hand pushing it through the mattress, twisting the aluminum shaft, forcing it up to tear through the soft flesh beneath the Adam's apple. He opened his mouth to scream, but only gagging sounds came from his ruined throat as the razor headed arrow impaled him through the neck, flooding his mouth with blood from his severed arteries, choking him. He thrashed against the powerful grip but it was too late. His failing vision saw the triangular tip of the arrow come bursting through his neck. Visible, now thrusting up just below his chin as blood came plummeting out in a fountain. And then there was time only for a few fragmented fleeting thoughts. The realization that he was dying, already dead, he agonized, not knowing who or why and one last searing flash of pain. A whiteness bursting against his eyes so bright, so incredibly painfully bright.

Chapter 5

Marcie picked her way carefully along the path to the latrine. A large cabin set back from the others in a clearing surrounded by a grove of trees. The rain was starting to let up a little but there were still little streams of water running down the path, reflecting the beam of her flashlight. She entered the building and flicked on the lights by the door. Water had found its way into the cabin. It was puddled up near the entrance and by the showers. She walked around it to the bathroom stalls, slipped out of her slicker, entered on the the stalls and put the flashlight down at her feet. Steve had obviously neglected to repaint the bathrooms in his rush to make sure everything was operable. The inside walls of the stall and the surface of the door were covered with graffiti left by former campers.

"'Forty Yards to the Outhouse' by Willy Makeit," Marcie read. She grimaced. Come on, kids. You can do better than that.

She checked to make sure the seat was clean. Well, she thought, this will probably be tomorrow's detail. Steve would probably have them in here, scrubbing down the floor and the stalls again after the rain and painting over all the the old graffiti, which would only provide a fresh clean irresistible surface for the new campers who would arrive at the end of next week.

She wondered what the point was. People were going to draw on walls no matter what you did. It was a way of saying 'I was here.' Some called it "vandalism." Others labeled it "inner city art," like a writer she saw on THE TONIGHT SHOW who said it was, what was it? "A new form of urban abstract expressionism" or something like that. But the bottom line was that people, especially kids, needed attention; a way of making their presence felt, A way of marking out their turf. Adults got to put personalized license plates on their cars. Signs with their names on their houses and front lawns and mailboxes. Personalized checks and grave business cards and stationary. Brass nameplates on their office desks and plastic name plates on their office doors. Initials on their briefcases and monograms on their pocket handkerchiefs. It was all the same thing, more or less; a way of establishing your identity, of saying 'this is me. I did this. I was here.' Its most common in big cities. Graffiti is rarely seen in small towns and when it is, as in this case, it was probably done by someone from the city. In small towns, identity was not much of a problem. People knew each other. They took the time to say your name and say hello. In a big city, you often got lost in the crowd.

The best attempt at a solution to the problem she had ever seen was in a bar she went to once.

Getting in by borrowing a girlfriend's fake ID. She had a couple

of beers and then went to the ladies' room where she found that the walls were made of blackboard slate. There was a tray with chalk so people could write whatever they wanted to on the walls on the theory that it would always be erased but someone had wanted to leave a message with more permanence. So, she had scratched her initials and date into the slate.

You couldn't win. People simply had to do it. Maybe that was why they did it, because you couldn't win. They had to scratch their initials into trees, make footprints in wet cement, spray paint their names on highway overpasses, often coupled with the names of a boy or girlfriend. It was a way of making their presence felt in a world where no one took the time to get to know them. Initials in a heart. We were here. We did this. We lived. We loved.

She thought of Jack, of his slim strong body. The feel of his warm skin. His lips on hers. The way he felt inside her. God, she had wanted him so much. Al the time they'd known each other. Every time they'd almost done it. Come so close that they had both ached with the need for one another. Al the time she pulled back when she really wanted to tear his clothes off and attack him.

She wondered if she had been his first. He certainly hadn't acted as if he was uncertain or inexperienced, but then, would a guy admit it if he was? No. She guessed that Jack probably had girls before and the fact that he hadn't rushed her had made it that much more special. She wondered if he knew she was on the pill. He'd never ask her but he probably assumed she was, figuring she would have said something if she wasn't. Although, she knew girls who didn't use anything but didn't let that stop them. Stupid.

She wondered if he had thought she was a virgin. In fact, she wasn't. Though she had not been on the pill when she had done it the first time. It hadn't been smart and it certainly hadn't been special.

It was long before she met Jack. She had only been 15. The experience left much to be desired. Some of her girlfriends had talked about saving it for when they got married. Or at least for the right guy.

But that idea had always bothered her. How did you know? How did you know when it was right?

How could you know if it was really good with someone that you cared about if you had no basis for comparison? And she had no desire to wait until she got married to have sex.

Sex was sex and love was love and the ideal situation, of course, was when they went together. But you had to know how to tell the difference between the two. Even so, just because you loved someone was no reason to marry them. It might be a reason to have sex but it took more than desire to make a marriage or even a relationship. It seemed like every second or third marriage nowadays

was ending in divorce and she didn't want to be a part of those statistics. The first time had been okay but that was about all she could say for it. Afterward, it hadn't seemed like a very big deal at all and that was probably why she had felt so disappointed. It should have been a big deal. Some of her older more experienced girlfriends had told her about orgasms, about what they felt like, about how incredible it was. She had gotten wet but she didn't know that wasn't it. She remembered thinking 'okay, so that's what it's like? Well, now I know.'

She knew there had to be much more to it. She started taking the pill eight months ago. She had frankly expected to have sex with Jack long before this, but she always found herself pulling back at the last moment. It probably wasn't fair to him to get him so hot all those times and then stop just before they passed the point of no return but then it wasn't just a case of her getting him all hot bothered; It worked both ways. She felt the frustration too.

She cared for him. She cared for him a lot but she didn't want to give in to the feelings of the moment only to lie there afterward thinking to herself, Okay, so that's what its like with him. Well, now I know. Hell, if a girl just wanted to get laid, it was the easiest thing in the world, especially if she was pretty and had nice tits. She just picked up a fake ID, teamed up with a girlfriend she could trust and hit some bar where she could be sure you wouldn't run into anyone from school or she could go to any one of a million places where you could get hit on by older guys. Christ, it happened all the time. You got hit on in supermarkets for God's sake and in records stores and just walking down the street and these days, you didn't even have to wait to get hit on. You could pick out some guy who looked nice. Someone who wasn't an obvious sleaze and you could make the move yourself. She knew some girls who did just that, who even made a point of going after married men on the theory that they wouldn't hassle you because they had much more to lose. But that wasn't what she wanted. She wanted more, much more.

She didn't want a short interlude of heavy breathing and temporary pleasure. She wouldn't settle for just feeling good. She remembered after that first time talking about it with her more experienced girlfriend who had said God, wasn't it great? Didn't it just make you do want to do it with every foxy guy you know?

She had said yes because the conversation seemed to call for it but she hadn't meant it. What she had wanted to say was yeah well I guess sit was sorta nice but is that really all there is? And No, it doesn't make me want to do it with every foxy guy I know. It made me wonder if its any different with somebody who rubs me when somebody who wants to be inside me not just my body. It made me want to do it with somebody who'd carve our initials on a tree, leave behind more than a

memory—a statement. "we were here. We did this. We loved."

She hated to think of them being apart after this summer. She felt very close to him right now but she wanted to feel closer because of what they'd share. It was funny in a way—for as long as they'd been together, there was always that pressure—that slight tension about when it was going to happen, not IF it would happen, but WHEN. There hadn't been any question in her mind about the IF for quite some time and now that it had happened, she felt a pressing need to get even closer to him, to become a part of him. Especially since they were going to go their different ways after this summer. She just wished she could peel back the layers of his mind and look inside, see and feel what he was really thinking, have it written on the wall of her memory. "We were here." "We loved."

She thought she heard the squeak of the door opening and she pushed the stall door open and peeked out.

"Jack?"

No answer.

"Jack? Is that you?"

She got up and left the stall, looking around the bathroom. There wasn't anybody there. It must have been the wind pushing the door open, she thought, or maybe just her imagination. She went over to the sink to wash her hands. She turned on the faucet. Nothing came out. She sighed and made a face into the mirror. She stared at her reflection for a moment and made another face at herself.

"When I looked into that mirror", she said doing Katherine Hepburn, "I knew I'd always be ugly. I said, Lady, you always be plain." She giggled and then stopped as she heard a footstep behind her in the shadows near the shower cabins.

"Hello?" she said, feeling a little self-conscious.

Nothing.

She shrugged and tried another faucet. Still, no water. Irritated, she struck the faucet with her fist. It didn't help.

Great, she thought, that's all they needed. No water.

She bent down to look under the sink and saw a cutoff valve on a T-fitting just below the pipes.

"Ah ha!" She said, crouching down and turning the valve. There was a cough and a sputter from the sink as water began to rush from the faucet. She straightened up and washed her hands, wiping them on her t-shirt then turned the water off. As she did so, she heard something behind her again.

She turned and stared into the shadows at the far end of the bathroom near the showers.

"Ned?"

It would be just like Neddie, she thought, to come popping out

at her in his Indian headdress waving a tomahawk or something.

"Hey, come on you guys," she said, walking slowly toward the showers.

"Ollie Ollie Oxen Free!" she approached one of the curtain shower stalls and pulled a chain on a light fixture hanging overhead. She reached out and grabbed the curtain, then abruptly yanked it open. It was empty. There was a slight drip coming from the showerhead. She stepped inside and twisted the faucet tighter, shutting off the drip. She pursed her lips and moved back, looking at the second shower stall. Was the curtain moving?

She reached out and took hold of the curtain, hesitating then jerked it back. Empty. She sighed.

"Must be my imagination."

Outside, the rain started coming down harder. It sounded like pebbles hitting the roof. It seemed as if the sound was getting louder. She thought of her dream: the rain, turning to blood, and a shiver ran down her spine. She turned, not seeing the shadow that suddenly appeared on the wall. The shadow of an axe being raised. She turned and saw a face, twisted into a horrifying grimace. A look of sheer, terrifying insanity. Eyes, wide and bulging. Lips, twisted in a snarl. She saw the axe now, held high. Saw it coming down. For brief second, everything switched into slow motion. She couldn't move. She couldn't breathe. She saw the arm beginning its downward sing.

She saw the steel blade coming directly at her face. She screamed a scream that was cut off as abruptly and as violently as it had begun, cut off as it tore from her throat. The steel blade struck her face and she felt the numbing force of its impact. That and nothing more, just one incandescently brief agonizing blow as it was buried in her forehead, splitting the skull, biting deep into the cranium. She was already dead as she fell back against the wall of the shower cabinet. Blood, running down her face. The axe, embedded in her forehead like some macabre Halloween prop, but the blood was real. It streamed from the deep gash and pattered to the floor like raindrops, running in red streams down the drain. The overhead light swaying crazily back and forth as the door was open briefly and a gust of wind blew through the bathroom. The door swung closed and everything was quiet again. Only the light fixture swung back and forth, back and forth, briefly illuminating Marcie's body slumped in the shower stall. Then it gradually stopped swinging, leaving her in darkness.

Chapter 6

Bill was down to his bare feet and he had already lost his shirt. Shoes and socks were the first casualties of the game and since neither of the girls were wearing socks, he thought they would be even fairly quickly. But Brenda and Alice had managed to stay ahead. Now, the tide of the game had turned and things were starting to get interesting. Brenda had lost her shorts on her last turn and now she rolled the dice and moved her game token across the board. Bill saw she was going to land on one of his properties again.

"Hello!" He grinned.

Brenda scowled.

"Worst run of bad luck since Richard Nixon." She pulled her shirt off. She had a pretty pink bra underneath, the sheer kind with Demi cuffs that exposed most of her breasts and left practically nothing to the imagination. It matched her pink bikini panties.

Poor Ned, Bill thought, Look what you're missing. Well, that's what happens when you leave the party early.

He smiled at Brenda as she dropped her shirt on the floor beside her chair.

"Well, you can always call it quits if you want to," he said, making it a challenge.

"Fat Chance," countered Brenda as Alice reached for the dice.

"You're two steps from Pacific Avenue and Skin City."

"Oooooh," said Bill in mock fright. He thought of Steve Christie coming back from town and walking in on them playing Monopoly stark naked. The thought of the expression on Steve's face almost make him choke on his beer.

"Whoops," said Alice as she landed on one of Bill's streets. Brenda laughed.

"Well, what can I say?" Bill said with an elaborate shrug, "It's not much, but I call it home."

He watched appreciatively as Alice started to unbutton her blouse.

A sharp gust of wind suddenly blew the door in. Alice gave a little scream as the door flew open and slammed against the inside wall. A brief burst of rain blew into the room. Alice grabbed for the flying play money as Bill jumped up to shut the door.

"I'll get it. I'll get it!"

"Wait a minute!" Brenda shouted, laughing, "Grab the money!"

"Oh, my God!" screamed Alice.

Bill forced the door closed against the wind. The game was in shambles. Play money and game tokens and deed cards had flown all over the place.

"It's blowing like crazy out there!" Bill said.

"Oh, and I think I left the windows of my cabin open," Brenda realized, "Shoot."

Alice rolled her eyes. Brenda grabbed her slicker and threw it over her shoulders then bent down to pick up her clothes.

"Well, we're gonna have to finish this game some other night," she said, "Just when it was getting interesting."

"Okay," said Alice, feeling secretly relieved. She started to help Bill pick up the pieces of the game.

"See you guys in the morning," Brenda said, heading toward the door.

"See ya!" Bill said.

"Night!" said Alice.

Another brief gust of wind whistled through the room as Brenda opened the door and quickly shut it behind her.

Alice sighed. "look at this mess."

She picked up the empty beer bottles and handed them to Bill.

"Here."

He took them from her and she picked up the rest of the empties and headed into the kitchen with him.

"Hey, tell me," Bill said, "We really gonna go ahead with it?"

Alice smiled.

"Actually, I hadn't made up my mind."

"Oh, well in that case, we'll have to finish the game another night."

"Oh yeah?" She gave him a playful kick and he ducked out of the way, chuckling. She watched him, wondering what would have happened if the wind hadn't blown the game all over the floor. What would Steve had said if he came back and walked in on them after a few more turns? And would they still be playing Monopoly? Maybe a lot could happen in a week, she thought, and the night wasn't over yet.

Steve Christie sat hunched over his coffee at the counter in the General Store. It had been a long day running heard on the counselors, trying to get everything organized and he was sick and tired of constantly running back into town because he had forgotten something. He had wanted to make sure this would be the last trip. He didn't particularly enjoy coming into town and picking up supplies, not that anyone gave him a hard time, but there was an edge to the way they all behaved around him.

They looked at him strangely. They didn't have to say a thing. Their eyes did all the talking.

Sandy was the only one who didn't look at him as if he were his father's ghost. He had lingered at the counter, enjoying a hot dinner, munching a hot slice of apple pie and nursing his coffee, much as he

used to linger over cokes and ice cream sodas at the same counter when he was a kid and a much younger Sandy. He used to flirt with him, making him feel older.

She always had a smile and a friendly word or two and if she ever said anything about the camp, she didn't talk about it in his presence. She seemed to understand that it was a sore point with him and that this was something he needed to do, if for no other reason than to prove everyone wrong about Camp Crystal Lake and his father.

I'll make a go of that damn place, he thought, I'll make a go of it and show them what a bunch of superstitious nonsense all this stuff about 'Camp Blood' is. I'll show them they were wrong about it, just like they were wrong about my father. A man, whose only curse was an incredibly pathetic run of the worst luck in the world. And it would serve them right if I sold the goddamned place for a healthy profit to some real estate developer who would come in and put up condos.

He grimaced. That did not seem very likely, although Alice thought it could happen. Lakefront property, she'd said, how can lakefront property be worthless?

He'd wanted to tell her. Tell her the real reason. Instead, what he had told her was that it can be worthless if it's in an area that's economically depressed. Small towns were dying all over the country. No jobs. The agriculture industry was going down the tubes with banks foreclosing on small farms and small-town businesses being bled dry as they lost their customers. It would take a lot more to turn things around than an occasional rock concert of music video to benefit the farmer.

Every domestic industry was being affected as the country shifted more and more to service industries and moved away from production, unable to compete with cheaper goods and labor from abroad. There had to be production. People had to get back to working with their hands. They had to have faith in themselves, in their own abilities, in the American spirit. Even the Japanese were saying that.

People were buying Japanese cars because they thought they were better than American cars. That the Japanese had better production and better-quality control. But even the Japanese admitted that they had learned it from America. He could remember a time when nobody would even touch anything if it said "MADE IN JAPAN." That had changed because the Japanese people had made a commitment to changing it. They had worked hard. He had always made a point of reading about people who had started successful companies, about their beginnings. You learned how to be successful by studying successful people.

Soichiro Honda had started with a small repair shop in Hamamatsu in 1928 and built it up into a factory producing piston

rings; a factory that was bombed to smithereens during the war. But he hadn't given up. After the war, he started up all over again, founding the Honda Technical Research Institute. It was an impressive sounding name, but the Institute had actually been only a wooden shed, measuring 18x12 feet. Honda had bought 500 army surplus engines, hired a few workers, and stuck the engines into bicycles. Connected them to the rear wheels with a drive belt. They ran on a mixture of gasoline and turpentine and smoked like a plugged-up chimney. Not much of a beginning but look where the Honda corporation was today and look at Chrysler, he thought, look at any company where the people really cared what they were doing and you'd see that you can turn anything around if you're willing to work at it.

Compared to some of those stories, a run down summer camp was a joke. But then, an 18x12 wooden shed that was supposed to be a Research Institute was a joke as well. Sure, he could have taken the easy way out. He could have put the place up for sale as rundown as it was and cut his losses as Alice had suggested. Alice simply didn't understand his dreams. She couldn't appreciate the long view. She didn't even understand the most basic elements of business. Lakefront property to her naturally meant it wasn't worthless.

Never mind that it was in a depressed area.

Never mind it was falling apart from neglect.

Never mind that it had been plagued by bad luck, starting with a boy drowning back in 1957 and two counselors being brutally murdered in 1958 and fires set by some arsonist the year after that and one thing after another ever since.

So that people now believed that the place was cursed. He had wanted to tell her the place was worthless because people believed in the curse upon it and upon his family. They thought he was crazy to reopen the camp, to drop twenty-five thousand dollars of his own money to refurbish it and bring in inner-city kids. Everyone in town thought drunken Old Ralph was crazy with his talk about death curses and the Lord's vengeance but were they really any better? At least Ralph said what was on his mind. Maybe they didn't say it out loud like Ralph did, but they thought it. He was convinced that some of the problems his father had experienced could be traced directly to the residents of Crystal Lake. He wondered as he went around town, picking up supplies.

Which of the people he had encountered had been the ones who set the fires?

Which ones had vandalized the cabins and poisoned the wells?

If there was any curse upon his family, he thought, it had been put there by some of the locals who didn't want to see the camp

succeed. They were convinced it was an evil place and they had suited their actions to their beliefs. It was a lot like a salesman who tried to sell a product he didn't believe in. Because he didn't believe in it, he didn't get behind it. And when the product, not surprisingly didn't sell, he justified his own beliefs, his own failure by saying see? It's just no good. I knew it all the time.

Well, he wasn't going to fail with the camp. It was all he had: His legacy, his beginning. If he could make a go of it and turn it, sell it as a successful little business instead of a rundown piece of lakefront property that would be of little use to anyone except some businessmen from the city who wanted to use it as a hunting retreat, then he could make a profit on it. More importantly, he could establish himself as a real estate speculator who had taken a worthless piece of property and made something out of it. That was the sort of thing that banks would look favorable upon and it would allow him to pyramid his investment: to get into something more ambitious. Something he could build upon.

You got to start somewhere, he thought, you gotta have a dream. Why couldn't Alice see that?

Maybe he just couldn't compete with that guy out in California. Maybe that was it. Maybe all Alice wanted was a reason to go back to him because he could offer her more and she was using the camp as that reason. If that was the case, he couldn't fight it and he wasn't going to try.

Alice was old enough to know her own mind. She wasn't a child and yet sometimes she acted like one. He'd start to reveal his plans, his dreams for a better future and he'd see her shut him out. He didn't even want to hear it. He had thought that if she could see the place, if she could come out and see what he had done, actually participate in the project, then she might come to appreciate what he was trying to do.

But no. She didn't really want to be there. She did her part but her heart wasn't in it. She seemed to be one of those live-for-today types. Eat. Drink. And be merry for tomorrow, we die.

If everybody thought that way, no one would ever accomplish anything.

He had lingered in the town partly because it had started raining and he wasn't anxious to drive back in the storm. He had been hoping it would let up. But at the same time, he wasn't looking foreword to spending another night with Alice, with her trying to convince him it was all a pointless waste of time. She didn't see the potential of the place, it's possibilities for success. She saw it as a romantic retreat, a place where apparently, she had hoped she could get him to loosen up and not take life so seriously.

They had each come to the camp with their individual goals in mind. He had hoped to get her interested in what he was trying to do; to get her involved so she could share his plans with him. She had hoped she could get him to walk along the lakeshore and gaze up at the stars, stop and smell the roses.

Only someone had to take the time to grow and tend the rose before anyone could smell them.

Alice didn't seem to understand that and obviously wouldn't try.

He sighed and pushed away his coffee cup. Hell. What was the point? It just wasn't going anywhere.

Neither of them was going to change. Maybe she would be better off going off to California. Maybe he'd be better off as well.

"Steve?" said Sandy, coming over to him, "Is there anything else you want?"

"Oh, no, no thanks, Sandy. I'm fine."

"You can't go back out there in that rain," she said, "You wanna get drowned?"

"No, but I've got to," Steve sighed, "I've got six new counselors up at the camp. They're babes in the woods in every sense of the word."

"Well, they'll be okay if they know enough to come out of the rain," Sandy said, smiling.

"Mhmm. Well, what do I owe you?" He reached for his wallet.

Sandy smiled at him and winked from behind her Harlequin glasses.

"Just a night on the town, Steve."

He laughed. It was the same sort of comment she used to make when he was younger. It had made him feel important then, that an older woman would flirt with him like that. Now, it made him feel nostalgic for his youth.

"Come on now, Sandy, you know what I mean."

She laughed.

"Okay. Two and a quarter."

He counted out three bills. She walked over to the antique cash register and rang it up.

"Here's your change, Steve."

"No, you keep it, Sandy."

"Thank you!"

"Sure."

He put on his slicker and headed for the door.

"You drive careful now," she said.

"I will."

"Goodnight!"

He put his hood up and ran to the Jeep, pausing briefly to

check the trailer hitch before he got in out of the rain.

Stupid, he thought. He should have done all this before the storm had started. Driving back from town with a loaded trailer on wet country roads at night was a good way to get into an accident. A Jeep was not the ideal vehicle to pull a trailer. It was too light and its wheel base was too short. He'd have to take it real easy.

He wiped the inside of the windshield with his bare hand while he waited for the engine to warm up. Falling raindrops glistened in the glare of the headlights. They were all probably sitting around the fireplace in the main cabin, tearing through the beer supply and smoking pt. He grimaced. He'd have to make a point of warning them about that. With everything that was known about marijuana now, you'd have to be an idiot to smoke the stuff. He knew it didn't necessarily lead to harder drugs, but the effects of smoking it were even worse on the lungs than smoking cigarettes.

He didn't want to see any of that sort of thing around the kids when they arrived, and he knew that Dorf would dearly love any excuse to make a surprise visit to the camp and search for drugs. All he needed was for Dorf to find a stash and bust one of the counselors. He'd have to bail the kids out.

There'd probably be a lawsuit from the parents of the campers, and it would provide the town council with the perfect excuse to shut the camp down. Of course, Alice probably wouldn't see it that way. She'd tell him to lighten up.

He sighed and shifted the Jeep to first gear. It gave a lurch as it strained against the weight of the trailer and then slowly gathered speed. All he wanted right now was to climb into his cot and get a long night's sleep; just forget about his problems and sink into the darkness.

Chapter 7

Brenda ran into the latrine, set her toilet articles on the shelf over the sink and tore off her slicker.

The rain showed no sign of letting up. It had tapered off slightly several times over the evening but otherwise had kept coming down steadily and hard. The path between the cabins were turning into mud. She thought it might be nice if it rained all throughout the night and into tomorrow. Then they wouldn't be able to do anymore work.

She frowned. On the other hand, Steve Christie probably had a whole list of things made up for them to do indoors. Clean the kitchen. Scour the floors. Repaint the beds.

If he ran out of ideas, he could always have them wallpaper the cabins. She wondered about him and Alice. There was something going on between the two of them, but there was also a visible tension.

She had only known Steve and Alice for a day and what with Steve running around so much, she had gotten to know Alice a bit better. But even on such short acquaintance, she couldn't quite manage to put the two of them together. Alice was so much more laid back than Steve; so much more easy going. And it was obvious that Steve's intensity was getting on her nerves. If Steve didn't watch out, Alice might decide to trade him in for Bill. She knew Bill was attracted to her and thought Alice had definitely been encouraging him.

She was kind of sorry the game had been broken up but then it would have been much better if Bill hadn't been the only guy there. She had sort of hoped that Neddie would come back and join in but he must have gone to bed early. She wondered where Jack and Marcie had gone. If Ned had crashed back at their cabin she didn't think they would have gone there. Maybe they'd grabbed a couple of sleeping bags and gone out to the empty camper's cabins.

Everyone had paired off for the night, she thought wistfully. Steve away in town, leaving Alice alone with Bill. Wonder if anything was going to happen there. Jack and Marcie off somewhere by themselves and here she was, alone.

She wondered if she should go look for Neddie. She was tempted but at the same time, she didn't want to seem too anxious. He was cute but she didn't want to scare him off. He seemed like a nice guy. Nice guys were few and far between. Put a rein on it, girl, she told herself. Take it slow. You've got all summer.

She brushed her teeth completely unaware that Marcie's body was growing colder and more rigid not ten feet away, an axe embedded in her skull. And neither Jack nor Neddie had all summer anymore. They had both run out of time.

As she finished washing up, she didn't have a clue that half the

counselors in the camp had died that night. She rinsed her mouth, threw her toothbrush and toothpaste tube back into her case, pulled on her slicker and went out the door just as one of the shower curtains behind her was slowly pushed aside.

She walked quickly back to her cabin, lighting the way with her flashlight. Her gaze so intent on the muddy path that she didn't see the latrine door open again. The sound of the rain and wind and her own footsteps squishing in the mud drowned out the sounds of her pursuer. The cabin was empty.

She smiled. Marcie was obviously out for the night.

She glanced out the window and saw that the light in the main cabin was still on.

Don't stay awake too long, Steve, she thought. She struck a match and lit the candle on the nightstand then turned off the cabin light. At least the generator was still working.

She shed her clothes and put on her flannel night gown. She picked up the candle and set it down carefully on the window ledge above the bed, then snuggled down between the covers with the book. A quiet, rainy night in a cabin in the woods, she thought, a perfect setting for a horror story.

She picked up a paperback she had brought. The book was about vampires on a Mississippi river boat. Just the thing for a night like this. She thought it would make a terrific film and wondered if Neddie was into horror movies.

Outside, over the sound of the wind and rain, a small voice cried out.

"Help me!"

For a second, Brenda wasn't sure she'd heard it. She put down the book and listened. There it was again.

"Help meeeee…"

It sounded like a child. She got out of bed and glanced out the window. It was impossible to see a thing.

What the hell was a little kid doing out there in the rain? She picked up her flashlight and went over to the door, opening it and peering out into the darkness, shining the beam all around the area outside the cabin.

"Hello?" she called out.

"Hello? Is anybody there?"

For a moment, she heard nothing but the wind and rain but there it was again, unmistakably the voice of a small child somewhere in the darkness.

"Hello?" she shouted, "Helloooo?"

The voice was muffled.

"Help Meeee. Heeelp Me."

Jesus, Brenda thought, what could have happened?

Maybe it was some little kid from town, out there by the lake, playing with some friends? Some kid that got separated somehow and then something happened. Maybe he slipped and fell and hurt himself or fell into an old trap or something. She shivered at the picture of a kid with his foot caught in one of those steel jawed traps. God, he could bleed to death! Where was he?

"Help me! Hellllllp me!"

"Where are you?" Brenda shouted, moving barefoot down the muddy path, shining her flashlight beam all around her, paying no attention to the wind and rain. A child was out there, in trouble! He sounded hurt.

"Help me!"

The voice was coming from the direction of the playing field, out by the archery range. She was certain of it. God, they had left a lot of tools in the storage shed, unlocked. Some little kid could have gone in there and—

"Hello?" Helloooo?" Can you hear me?" she shouted. Her eyes straining to penetrate the darkness.

She started moving faster. Suddenly, someone threw the switch on the junction box and the quartz halogen spotlights mounted on poles at the edge of the range came on, bathing her in brilliance. She turned and squinted against the glare, backing away, trying to block out the light with her hand over her eyes. She couldn't see if there was someone standing at the edge of the range or not.

"All right," she shouted angrily, "Come on out. It's not funny anymore."

She backed away from the bright lights, shielding her eyes with her hand, trying to see if anyone was there. Neddie. It had to be. Damn it. This was just too much."

"It's not funny at all!" she yelled. Now, she was sure she could see a figure at the edge of the range, just a back lit shadow. Neddie, she thought, I'm going to kill you.

Then, she saw the figure raising something, pulling back.

Oh my god, she thought, it was a bow! Has he gone completely crazy? What does he—She heard a soft hiss coming toward her, unbelievably quickly. And in the split second that she realized what it was and screamed, the arrow plunged into her stomach, sending her stumbling back against the archery target behind her. It was followed by another and another and another. The arrows making dull, wet smacking sounds as they plowed into her flesh. But after the second one, she could no longer feel a thing.

They had finished cleaning up and Alice threw another log on to the fire, then she walked over to the couch and picked up Bill's

guitar. She strummed a couple of chords. There had been a time where she had wanted to learn how to play, but she'd never been able to get past C AM F and G7. You could play a lot of songs with just those four chords and she had been able to fake it a few times at parties, making people think she really knew how to play. But in the end, she had become frustrated and gave it up.

Bill was really good. He didn't just strum it—he finger picked. He was gentle with it, his fingers seemed to caress the strings. She wondered what those fingers would feel like, caressing her.

She had watched him earlier that evening, sitting on the couch and absently picking up a chord progression and later, during dinner, and afterward during the game. He always seemed so laid back, so comfortable. He just seemed to take things in stride, especially now after that game. A lot of guys would have made a pass at her, but here they were alone and Bill hadn't made a single move. It wasn't that he was afraid Steve might arrive. She didn't think that was the reason because they had a clear view from the front window of the dirt road leading into the camp. They would have seen Steve headlights coming.

It just seemed that he wasn't the sort of guy to make moves on a girl. She had given him no encouragement, so he was simply being friendly. She thought he was attracted to her, but he wasn't rushing anything. He was taking the time to get to know her and how she felt about things, especially Steve. Instead of trying to force things, he was willing to kick back and let them happen—take things as they came. No rush. No hassle.

She found that a very attractive quality. She was wondering if perhaps she shouldn't encourage him a little when she thought she heard a scream.

Bill came in from the back room, carrying a kerosene lantern he'd been filling.

"Bill?" she said.

"Hi," he said, smiling. "Just checked on the generator. It's still running okay."

"I thought I heard a scream," she said.

"I don't know how you can hear anything through that wind."

He was obviously not taking her seriously.

"It sounded like Brenda."

He glanced up at her sharply, looking to see if she was pulling his leg. She seemed completely serious.

"I'd better take a look," he said.

"Yeah." Alice stood by the window, looking out through the curtains.

"And somebody turned out the lights at the Archery range."

"What?" Bill came over to the window. "I can't see anything."

"They're off now," Alice said.

He glanced at her. She looked frightened.

"I'm gonna check it out," he said, reaching for his slicker.

"Bill? Can I come?"

"Come on then."

He had a feeling it was probably one of the others fooling around. Undoubtedly, Ned. Only Ned would be goofing off in the middle of a storm but it couldn't hurt to check. He handed her slicker to her and they went out into the rain.

Down the path toward Brenda's cabin, lighting the way with the lamp. They ran up the steps and opened the door.

"Brenda?" Alice called, "Brenda!"

There was no sign of anyone inside.

There was a candle burning on the shelf and her slicker was still hanging on a hook behind the door.

Where is she" Alice wondered. She must be with Jack and Marcie she said to herself as Bill went past her.

"They were probably out in one of the other cabins smoking dope or something."

"Alice?" Bill called.

"Yeah?"

"Come here."

His voice sounded strange. She ran over to where he stood bending down over Brenda's bed. He pulled back the covers. There was a bloody axe on the pillow. Bill picked it up and turned to look at Alice.

"What is going on?" She said.

"Come on," said Bill.

They ran out the door, heading toward Jack and Ned's cabin.

"Jack!" shouted Bill.

He hammered on the door.

"Jack! Open the door!"

"Where are they?" Alice cried.

"I don't know," said Bill, "Come on."

They ran down to the latrine cabin. Alice turned on the light as they came through the door.

"Brenda? Marcie?"

"Jack?" said Bill.

There was no response.

The bathroom seemed empty.

"Neddie?" Alice said.

Bill bent down and picked up Marcie's flashlight.

"You know," Alice said uneasily, "I think we should call

someone."

"If this is a joke, I'm gonna brain 'em."

"I'm serious," Alice said, "I really think we should call someone.

They ran to the office. It seemed as if they were the only ones left in the camp.

"Sucker's locked," said Bill, pulling on the door and rattling it, kicking at it in frustration.

"Where's the key?"

"I don't know. Wait a minute. Watch out."

With her elbow protected by the rubberized sleeve of the slicker, she smashed one of the glass panes in the door then reached in and opened the lock from the inside.

"Careful," said Bill as she pulled her hand out through the broken glass. She opened the door and went inside. "Get the light," said Bill.

She flicked on the light while he ran for the phone and picked it up. A second later, he slammed the receiver back down.

"What's wrong?" she said.

"It's dead. Try the payphone."

"Do you have a dime or a quarter?" Alice asked.

"No. Check the desk."

She rummaged around until she found a small metal strongbox containing petty cash and one of the lower drawers. She signed in relief when she saw it wasn't locked. She took some change and ran back to the phone. She dropped the coins in.

"Hello? Hell-o?" Oh, this damn thing's dead too."

"Relax," said Bill.

Alice was starting to get all worked up and there was no reason for it. Yet.

There had to be an explanation. The phones were dead because the line was down somewhere. It was the storm. That was the only possible explanation, but it wasn't. One explanation that did not occur to him was that the line might have been cut. In this case, chopped with a machete.

Alice slammed the phone back on the cradle and ran out of the cabin.

Bill took off after her. She sprinted down the hill towards Neddie's pickup truck. She made it to the truck just yards ahead of Bill, threw open the door and leaped inside, only to discover there were no keys in the ignition.

"Alice," Bill said, opening the door.

"Damn it! Damn it! No keys! Neddie's got the keys!"

"Alice! You've got to calm down! There has to be a—"

"We've got to get out of here!" she screamed, staring at him

wildly. Fear was coursing through her.

She could feel that something had happened to the others—something she didn't even want to think about.

"Hot wire! You said you worked on cars! Can you hotwire a car?"

"Of course I can hotwire a car but—"

"Then do it! Do it now, Bill!"

Rather than argue with her, he got into the truck, reached underneath the dash and he yanked down the wires leading to the ignition switch. It only took a few seconds to find the hot lead. He touched the wires together and the starter motor turned over but the engine wouldn't catch.

"Again! Do it again!" said Alice.

He tried several more times with the same result then got out and went to the front of the truck and raised the hood.

"What's the matter with it?" Alice said.

"It's wet," said Bill. He shrugged. "I don't know."

It was nothing glaringly obvious. Nothing he could see in the dark with only a flashlight and he wasn't really looking that hard, either, being more concerned with calming Alice. That was why he didn't see the cut wires leading out of the distributer cap.

Alice jumped off the truck and ran to him.

"Why don't we just hike out of here?" she said, "Just get out, right now?"

"Look!" said Bill, taking her by the arm, "It's ten miles to the nearest crossroads. Steve will be back soon. We can use his Jeep to get help. Don't worry. There's probably some stupid explanation for all of this."

"Like what?" she said.

He put his arm around her and kissed her on the cheek.

"It's okay. We'll be laughing about this tomorrow, I promise."

He grabbed the hood of the truck and slammed it shut.

"Come on, let's get out of this rain."

***

Getting out of the rain was just what Steve Christie was thinking about as he sat in the drivers seat of his Jeep about five miles from the camp, stuck in the mud. The deer had bottled across the road in front of him and he had only seen it at the last moment. He had swerved but the added weight of the load he was towing sent the Jeep slewing around and the trailer jackknifed, nearly flipping over. He barely managed to bring the whole sliding rig under control, but not before he had skidded off to the side of the road and onto the soft shoulder which the rain had turned into quicksand.

The trailer was stuck fast in a muddy ditch and even the four-wheel drive wasn't enough to get it out.

Perfect, he thought.

Leaning his head against the steering wheel, for a while it had looked as if things were beginning to go well and now everything was suddenly going wrong.

The rain was probably going to ruin all the painting they had done outside. There was a slight chance that the paint might have dried in time, but Steve wasn't counting on it. On top of that, the cook he'd hired had never shown up. He had run into Dorf in town and Crystal Lake's answer to Don Knotts was already complaining that the kids he'd hired were a bunch of smartass wise guys. Apparently, he'd taken a ride out there earlier and they had neglected to salute him. And Alice was ready to give up and go back to California. And now this.

Maybe there really was a curse on the damn place.

Flashing red lights came on behind him and he glanced into the rearview mirror and sighed with relief as he saw the police car pull off the side of the road. He pulled up the hood of his slicker and got out of the Jeep. The spotlight shone on him and he squinted against its glare.

"Hi, Steve."

It was Sergeant Tierney.

"Hi," said Steve, relieved that it wasn't Dorf.

"I thought that thing would go through anything," said Tierney.

"Not riding a trailer," Steve replied wryly, "Can you give me a lift?"

"Sure."

Tierney opened up the passenger door for him.

"I'll have one of my counselors bring me back in the morning," Steve said, getting in.

"No problem."

Tierney turned off the flashers and pulled back onto the road.

"Hell of a night, isn't it?"

"It's a nasty one," Steve agreed."

"It's not bad enough, it's Friday the 13th," said Tierney, grimacing. "We've got a full moon too." He snorted. "We keep statistics, you know? We have more accidents, more rapes, more robberies, more homicides, more of everything when there's a full moon. It upsets people—makes 'em nuts."

Steve grinned. "You've made a science out of coincidence."

Tierney shrugged.

"Can't argue with the numbers. Heard Old Ralph was out your way today. His wife was a nervous wreck until we got him home."

"Oh boy, that's all I need," said Steve, "Crazy Ralph running

around."

"Well, at least the rain's stopping. Pisser while it lasted."

The radio crackled and the dispatcher's voice came on.

"Sergeant Tierney, come in. Sergeant Tierney, Code Niner."

Tierney grabbed the mic.

"This is Tierney."

"Rescue squad with jaws of life," the dispatcher said, "Near mile marker 17. Possible fatals. Three, maybe four trapped. Head on."

"Roger," Tierney said, "A knowledge receipt. Estimated arrival: 15 minutes.

He hung the mic back on its hook.

"See what I mean?" he said.

He pulled over at the turnoff leading to the camp.

"I'll have to let you off here, Steve."

"Sure, thanks. Good luck."

He got out of the car and Tierney swung around, hitting the lights and the siren.

Steve gave him a wave then started down the road. As he approached the new sign by the entrance, he saw a Jeep parked at the side of the road. Someone was standing beside it, aiming a flashlight at him. He squinted against its glare and shaded his eyes.

"Hello? Who is that?"

He approached the figure, trying to make out who it was.

"Oh, Hi," he said, smiling with recognition. The knife blade flashed briefly in the light and then plunged deep into his stomach. He felt it as a blow, as if he had been punched hard in the stomach and the wind whistled out of him. His first reaction was utter disbelief and then he felt the first sharp piercing pain as the knife was withdrawn and then plunged in again.

His hands flew up in a futile gesture to protect himself but his knees were already buckling. The knife flashed down again and again, slashing repeatedly and as he fell, unable to scream, the full realization of what was happening to him sunk in.

In the brief moment before he collapsed, he suddenly knew what had happened to those two young counselors back in 1958.

He knew who had set the fires.

He knew who had poisoned the water.

He also knew the reason why, but the knowledge came too late. Far too late. And as he fell, dying, he remembered what Tierney had said about Friday the 13th and the full moon. His last agonized thought was that there was nothing he could do to save those poor kids at the camp. Nothing at all.

Chapter 8

As the rain stopped and the winds started to die down, all the lights suddenly went out. In the darkness of the cabin, Alice gasped and reached out quickly, grabbing Bill's arm and squeezing it convulsively.

"It's all right," Bill said, putting his arm around her and giving her a squeeze.

"It's all right. Don't worry, I'll get the lamps."

He left her standing in the main room of the cabin and went into the kitchen to get a couple of kerosene lamps. He brought them in and set them on a table, then struck a match and lit a candle so he could see what he was doing.

Alice stood, holding herself tensely while he lit the lamps.

"What do you think happened?" she said in a small voice.

"I don't know," said Bill, "The generator's probably out of gas. I'll go check it."

"You want me to come with you?" she asked, anxiously, afraid of going outside but more afraid of being left alone.

He shook his head and led her to the couch.

"Why don't you stay here and try to get some sleep? I'll be right back."

He gently eased her down and covered her with a blanket. She stared up at him, eyes wide, lips trembling slightly. Whatever was going on, he thought, it had long since passed the joke stage. It wasn't funny anymore. Alice was genuinely frightened, but he remained convinced that the others were behind this. The generator might have run out of gas or they might have turned it off, just playing games.

Maybe Ned put them up to this, he thought, it was just the sort of juvenile prank he would pull and Brenda would have probably gone along with it. But Jack and Marcie seemed to have a lot more sense than to pull something this stupid. They had probably all gone off and smoked somewhere, got silly, and decided to play a practical joke. Hide and seek. Ghosts and monsters in the dark. Kids' stuff. But the laughter stopped when someone got as scared as Alice did, especially the bit with the bloody axe in Brenda's bed. It was probably red paint. He hadn't stopped to check. It had actually scared him a little too. Sick, he thought, really sick. He had half a mind to deck Neddie when he found them and Steve wouldn't be amused by this at all.

Unlike Alice, he knew why the people in the town called the place "Camp Blood." When he had first arrived, he had stopped in for breakfast at the general store in Crystal Lake and struck up a conversation with one of the locals who had told him all about the drowning in 1957, the murders in 1958, and everything that had happened since- every time the Christies had tried to reopen the

camp.

At first, Bill hadn't really believed him. He had worked as a camp counselor every summer for the last five years and he heard every single summer camp ghost story there was to hear. Most of them were variations of the same thing. A tired classic told around the campfire late at night.

The story of the hook.

There was a homicidal maniac who had killed a lot of people and been locked up in an asylum for the criminally insane. This asylum always just happened to be somewhere not far from the camp. The killer, so the story went, had lost his hand and in its place, he had a steel hook. The hand was never found. The killer had lost it somewhere nearby in the woods and he was obsessed with finding it.

By this time, if you paced the story right, and described some of the killer's murders in particularly gruesome detail, the campers would all be sitting wide eyed around the fire, hanging on your every word. A lot of people thought it was just a story you'd tell the campers; at least, the storyteller would go on to say that's what couple of the counselors who worked here last year thought until the night they sneaked off in a car, driving to a deserted country road not far away. They had parked the car beneath some trees and turned the lights out. As they were sitting there, making out and listening to the radio, the girl thought she heard something just outside the car. A twig snapping. A footstep. A little scratching noise as if someone was touching the door handle with something made of metal. She got scared all of a sudden and insisted that they leave, drive off right away. And the guy who she was with caught the mood from her and started up the car and floored it, Peeling out. They were driving back into the camp right down that very road there—and the storyteller would point at the road leading into the camp - that they'd relaxed and started laughing about it, feeling foolish for getting so carried away and letting their imaginations get the better of them. And as they were getting out of the car, something clinked against the car door and there, hanging from the door handle, was a steel hook.

(And then, you dropped the bombshell:)

Earlier that night, you'd tell them you had heard on the radio that the killer had escaped from the insane asylum and the state police had set up road blocks and were combing the woods, looking for him. They had issued a warning for the people in the area to stay indoors because the man was highly dangerous, a maniac, an animal and he had last been seen in the vicinity of—

(fill in the name of the camp). –-

He's looking for his hook, you'd tell them in a very low voice, that very same hook that he lost last year when he tried to kill those

counselors and they just barely managed to escape in time. He's convinced the hook is here, you'd continue, right here in this camp and, in fact, those two counselors last year had left it here. It's really been here all along and the killer knows it. He knows it's here and he knows we have it. And he won't rest until he gets it back. And you'd quickly reach into your jacket and pull out a steel hook and hold it up for everyone to see. It worked best if you had taken some polish to it and really shined it up so that it would gleam in the firelight. And it worked even better if you dabbed some paint on the end and sprinkled it with dirt so that it looked like dried blood where it had been ripped from the killer's stump.

First, he had lost his hand, you would tell them, pausing dramatically as you turned the hook slowly so it caught the firelight, and now he's lost his hook. And what's more, he knows we have it and now that he's escaped, and at that moment, on cue, somebody would come leaping out of the darkness, screaming like a maniac wearing a mask or a pillowcase with eyeholes cut in it. He'd have one hand pulled up inside his sleeve, so it looked like a stump. And in the other hand, he'd be holding a large knife or maybe an axe or machete and he'd jump on top of you, screaming horribly and wrestle you to the ground.

If you screamed enough, it usually scared the campers out of at least ten years growth. He had seen and heard a vast number of variations on that theme. Every summer camp had its own version, like a time honored tradition.

He had thought this "Camp Blood" thing with the drowning and the murders and the fires was just another version of the same old story, but the guy he had talked to back in town had seemed quite serious about it. And now, despite his conviction that Neddie and the others were just doing a number on them, he felt a tightness in his stomach as he walked down the muddy path to the utility cabin to check the generator.

They had to be around here someplace, he thought, there were only two vehicles. Steve had taken the Jeep and Neddie's pickup was still there. They had tried to start it but the distributer or the plugs must have been wet or something. Neddie would be pissed as hell when he found the ignition wires torn loose but it would serve him right.

They're here, thought Bill, they have to be. They couldn't have walked all the way into town in the storm. It was at least ten miles.

Once he got the generator working again, he was going to make a cabin by cabin search, including the boathouse by the dock. When he found them, he had a good mind to toss them all into the lake. God damn juvenile nonsense.

He opened the door to the utility cabin and hung the lamp on a

hook just above the generator. He took off his slicker and dropped it on the floor, then unscrewed the gas cap on the generator's fuel tank, picked up the yardstick and stuck It in the tank. He pulled it out and held it close to the lamp.

"Full of gas," he muttered to himself. They had probably just turned it off.

He bent down to check the switch.

I'm going to kill them, he thought, somebody's going to die.

***

Alice woke with a scream.

"Bill!"

She sat up on the couch, breathing hard, not knowing what had awakened her. She didn't remember dropping off to sleep.

"Bill?"

The thought of being left alone unsettled her. First, Neddie disappears. Then Jack and Marcie. Then Brenda. And Now, Bill.

"The generator."

She sighed as she remembered that he had gone to check it but he should have been back by now and the lights were still out. Maybe there was something wrong. A loose wire or something and he was working on it.

She took a deep breath and let it out slowly then picked up the other lantern and went into the kitchen to put on a pot of tea.

What the hell was going on? Where was everybody? Steve still wasn't back. Maybe he had decided to stay in town until that storm blew over. Maybe he got stuck on the road. But where were Jack and Marcie and Neddie and Brenda?

Well, maybe they'd all paired off as she'd thought and were in some of the other cabins, having their own parties. But they had checked the cabins at least the onces where the counselors were staying and there was no sign of them. She didn't feel like checking the other cabins in the dark by herself.

Besides, Bill had probably already done that. Maybe he'd even found them and given them all a piece of his mind. He was convinced that this was all a joke. But she didn't find it very funny. They'd probably all be coming in any time now, laughing about how they'd scared her half to death.

What time was it anyway?

It had to be the middle of the night. She wished Bill would hurry back. She wished Steve would get back from town. She wished somebody, anybody would come. Being alone was giving her the creeps.

She put on her slicker and picked up the lantern then went

outside, taking the path down to the utility cabin. It was pitch dark outside. She could barely see a thing. She held the lantern high, picking her way careful y along the path.

"Bill?......Bill?"

There was no answer.

"Bill?" she shouted it louder. "Bill!"

God, she thought, this is all I need. Where was everybody disappearing to?

"Biiiiiiilllll…."

The door to the utility cabin was open. The light was on.

"Bill?"

There was no one inside. A slicker lay crumpled on the floor. She picked it up. It was still wet. It had to be Bill's. Where was he?

"Bill?"

She stepped outside and started to close the door. It felt strangely heavy.

Bill was hanging on the door, blood running down his face and chest. His throat was slashed. There was an arrow stuck in his eye. Another arrow pierced his neck and several more were rammed into his body, plunged in after he had been hung up. Driven in so deeply and so hard that they had gone straight through him and into the wooden door.

Alice screamed, bringing her hands up to her face and backing away from the awful sigh in disbelief.

"Bill!"

She grabbed the lantern and ran sobbing back to the main cabin. The terrifying knowledge of what had happened to the others overwhelmed her. She ran through the door and slammed it shut.

Searching wildly for some way to secure it, she spotted a length of rope and picked it up, tossing one end over a rafter and pulling it tight, then tying it to the doorknob so the door could not be pulled open.

Sobbing hysterically, she searched for something to barricade the door. She ran over to the windows and pulled the curtains shut, then picked p a large fireplace log and set it in front of the door.

Not heavy enough.

She grabbed a trunk and dragged it over, then a chair, piling things up in front of the door, half out of her mind with fear.

A weapon! She had to find a weapon—something to protect herself.

She grabbed a baseball bat in one hand and clutched the lantern in the other, trying to catch her breath, trying desperately to think straight. But all she could see was Bill's body hanging on the door, transfixed by arrows and covered with blood.

She started to hyperventilate. She ran into the kitchen and set the lantern on a table, then rummaged through the shelves. She pulled down a barbeque fork and readied herself to stab with it, still gripping the baseball bat in the other hand.

She stood in the center of the room, looking all around, expecting the killer to come bursting through the door at any moment. She swallowed hard and tried to control her breathing. Her heart was pounding.

My god. My god. She thought, They're dead. They're all dead! I'm the only one left! What am I going to do?

She glanced out the kitchen window, then quickly closed the curtains and leaned against the refrigerator, sobbing and gasping for breath.

Suddenly, the kitchen window shattered in a rain of glass as Brenda's body crashed through it.

Hurled from outside by someone with incredible strength. Alice recoiled from the window, screaming. Brenda's corpse fell onto the kitchen floor like a sack. It was pierced with arrows and caked with blood. Blood on her face and neck. Blood everywhere. And she was tied tightly with rough rope, tied so her arms were against her side to prevent them from flopping around.

"Brenda!" Alice whimpered. She sank to her hands and knees and crawled around the body, away from the window, sobbing uncontrollably. She crawled to the center of the room, backed up against the stove and leaned up against it, rising unsteadily to her feet, thinking only that she had to get away. She had to run. But where?

The killer was outside, outside that very cabin and she could block the door but there was no way to block the windows, no way to watch all of them at once. She tried to run back to the main room but something caught hold of her jacket.

Terror-stricken, she fought against the pole, convinced that the killer had somehow gotten inside.

She turned and saw that the jacket had caught on the oven door. She shrugged out of it and ran into the main room, then realized she had dropped the baseball bat in the kitchen.

She stood in the center of the room, glancing wildly from window to window, unable to force herself to go back in the kitchen. And then, she saw approaching headlights.

Steve!

She started to pull down her barricade, sobbing with relief.

"Steve!" she screamed, "Steve!"

She struggled with the knot on the rope securing the door, her fingers working spastically. Finally, it was loose and she tore it away, threw open the door and went running out toward the headlights of the

Jeep, crying hysterically, shouting Steve's name over and over again.

She heard the car door slam and saw a figure step out of the Jeep, silhouetted in the glare of the headlights.

"Steve!" she cried, running up to him.

It wasn't Steve.

Chapter 9

Alice came to an abrupt halt less than a yard from the tall slim blond woman who stood before her, dressed in boots, slacks, and a sweater.

"Who… who are you?" she whimpered, backing away.

The woman gave her a friendly smile.

"Why… Why I'm Mrs. Voorhees, an old friend of the Christies'."

Alice ran up and threw her arms around her, sobbing.

"Help me… Help me please…"

"Now, now dear…" said Mrs. Voorhees, trying to comfort her, "I can't help you if you don't calm down, please."

"But… she's dead!" sobbed Alice, gasping for breath, "He's dead and oh my god, poor Bill! Oh God! They're dead… they're all dead!"

"Alright… alright…" said Mrs. Voorhees, as if trying to humor her. "All right, come on dear, then show me."

"No!" Alice screamed, moving away from her, "No… no."

"But it's all right," Mrs. Voorhees shook her head and smiled.

"I'll take care of you. I… I used to work for the Christies.'

"Oh, God," Alice sobbed, "Please, you've got to help me get out of here."

"It's just this place," said Mrs. Voorhees.

"No!" said Alice, shaking her head.

The woman clearly didn't believe her. She had to make her believe.

"…And the storm," Mrs. Voorhees continued, "That's why you're upset.

"No!" Said Alice, shaking her head violently. "No! No! they're all dead! They're all dead!"

"Alright… alright," said Mrs. Voorhees, nodding. "I'll go look."

"No!" Alice grabbed her arm, "No, please… don't leave me… he'll kill you too!"

Mrs. Voorhees laughed.

"I'm not afraid."

She disengaged herself from Alice's grip and started walking purposeful y toward the cabin. Feeling helpless, Alice hurried after her, unwilling to go back yet terrified of being left alone.

The minute they were back inside the cabin, Alice pulled the door shut behind them, looking around fearfully.

Mrs. Voorhees gasped at the sight of Brenda's body on the kitchen floor.

"Oh my Lord…" she looked down at Brenda then glanced up at Alice but she didn't seem to be seeing her. "So young… so pretty… Oh, what monster could have done this?"

"Bill's out there!" Alice said. She wanted to tell her that Bill had been killed too and probably Jack and Marcie and Ned, too but she couldn't go on. She'll see now, she told herself, she'll realize the terrible danger that we're in and she'll help me get away from here.

But Mrs. Voorhees showed no sign of leaving.

"Oh God, it's this place!" said Mrs. Voorhees, "Steve never should have opened this place again!

"There's been too much trouble here…

"Did you know that a young boy drowned the year before those two others were killed?"

Her voice suddenly took on a hard edge.

"The counselors weren't paying any attention!"

Alice stared at her.

"They were making love while that young boy drowned!"

Mrs. Voorhees said making love as though it were an obscenity. Her eyes glazed.

"His name was Jason."

Alice didn't understand. What was she talking about? What was wrong with her? They had to get out of here! But the words wouldn't come. It was if a fist had suddenly closed around her heart and started squeezing.

"I was working the day it happened, preparing meals," Mrs. Voorhees said, coming towards Alice, her eyes vacant as if she were in a trance. "I was the cook."

Without warning, she grabbed Alice. Her fingers like talons, closing around her arms in an incredibly powerful grip. As Alice gasped, Mrs. Voorhees shook her hard enough to make her teeth rattle.

"Jason should have been watched, every minute! He was—"

Her voice trailed off and suddenly focused on Alice, seeing her clearly for the first time. Her face relaxed and she smiled a chilling smile. Only the mouth moved. The eyes remained fixed on Alice in a baleful glare.

"He wasn't a very good swimmer," she said, then she laughed. Crazy laughter.

"We can go now, dear."

Oh God, thought Alice, realization slowly dawning.

"I… I think we should wait for Mr. Christie."

She struggled to keep her voice steady. Mrs. Voorhees crackled again.

"Oh… that's not necessary…"

"I—I don't understand," said Alice, slowly backing away from her.

"Jason was my son," said Mrs. Voorhees, her eyes getting that

mad faraway look again, "And today is his birthday."

"Where is Mr. Christie?" Alice asked but Mrs. Voorhees acted as if she hadn't heard. Her eyes were unfocused, looking inward somewhere, seeing twisted visions from the past, visions of a young boy floundering weakly in the lake, arms thrashing, sputtering as water filled his mouth, crying.

"Help! Help, Mommy, Help!"

A small boy drowning, crying for help. A boy, who had never cried before. A boy who had always been disturbingly silent, never speaking, never laughing. A boy who lived in his own strange, silent world, shunned by other children. Always keeping to himself.

"Oh, I couldn't let them open this place again, could I?" said Mrs. Voorhees, "Not after what happened."

She shook her head, as if to dispel the vision of her son sinking beneath the surface of the water, but the vision wouldn't go away. It played in her mind constantly, over and over and over. She dreamed about it. It plagued her while she was awake. The guilt had gnawed at her sanity, relentlessly nibbling it away until finally Pamela Voorhees had gone completely, totally mad.

"Oh my sweet, innocent Jason," she said, tears welling up in her eyes. "My only child… Jason…"

She turned to look at Alice, her gaze boring into her. Eyes wide, pupils dilated. The corners of her mouth, twitching.

"You let him drown!"

Alice felt hypnotized by that snake-like stare. Like a rabbit, mesmerized by a cobra. She wanted to scream. She wanted to run but she couldn't move a muscle. Her mouth was dry. Her skin felt clammy.

She stood motionless and silent but her mind was screaming.

"You never paid any attention!" The madwoman shrieked.

There was a table between them. Mrs. Voorhees suddenly grabbed it and flung it aside as if it didn't weigh a thing. The crash of the table snapped Alice out of her disbelieving shock and her muscles finally responded. She jerked and shook her head, blinking away tears.

"No! No!"

"Look what you did to him!" cried Mrs. Voorhees, snarling as she raised her sweater, revealing the hunting knife in the sheath on her belt.

Alice looked around in panic, forgetting where she had dropped the baseball bat and her gaze lit on the fireplace—on the long, pointed iron poker. Mrs. Voorhees screamed like a wild animal and clawed the knife from its sheath, raising it high as she lunged at Alice.

Alice grabbed for the poker and brought it down hard, swinging it with all her might as Mrs.

Voorhees leaped at her. The side of the poker connected with

her head and Alice felt the impact all the way up her arm. With a grunt, Mrs. Voorhees staggered and collapsed onto the couch. Alice brought the poker down again, clubbing her across the back, then stood over her, holding the weapon high, ready to bring it down again.

The woman didn't move.

My God, Alice thought, she's crazy! She's killed all the others and now I've killed her!

Then, she saw that the woman was still breathing and a small voice in her mind—a hysterical, instant voice—a voice that suddenly frightened her almost as much as Mrs. Voorhees had said "Finish it."

Alice backed away, shaking her head, not willing to listen to that voice. She sobbed and dropped the poker then turned and fled out of the cabin, thinking: the car! Get to the car! Get out! Run!

Behind her, Mrs. Voorhees stirred and moaned, slowly pushing herself up on the couch. Alice ran sobbing toward the Jeep. The headlights were still on. She prayed that Mrs. Voorhees had left the keys in the ignition. She reached the Jeep and yanked open the door.

Annie's blood-spattered body was propped up in the passenger's seat, throat slashed from ear to ear.

Alice recoiled, screaming hysterically. Even if the keys were still in the ignition, there was no way she could have jumped inside that Jeep with Annie's body in there and blood all over the seats. It would have taken more than she had to get inside, push the body out, and drive away. It would've taken reason and cold logic and all that Alice felt now was a blind, unreasoning panic—A screaming hysteria that shouted at her to get away, to run. It didn't matter where—just run. Escape. Flee from the horrid reality.

She bolted down the path, slipping in the mud, unable to stop screaming. Her feet slid out from under her and she slammed to the ground. The wind almost knocked out of her but she scrambled up again, terrified, slipped again, and ran, barely able to see anything in front of her.

Suddenly, a shape loomed up out of the darkness before and she skidded to a stop, almost running into Steve's body hanging upside down from a stout branch over the trail. It turned slowly in the wind, dripping blood onto the path like a slab of meat in a slaughterhouse.

Pamela Voorhees heard the screams and grinned. She stood outside the cabin, oblivious to the cut on her head where Alice had struck her with the poker. She felt no pain, only a raging lust to annihilate the girl responsible for Jason's death.

They were all responsible! All those spoiled, immoral young people. Juvenile delinquents who took jobs as camp counselors so they could drink beer and take drugs and fondle one another in the

darkness—Doing filthy, disgusting things to each other—coupling, like animals, heedless of the tender, innocent young lives that had been entrusted to them. They all had to pay, just as those who hired them had to pay. They were all responsible for twenty years she had relentlessly pursued her crusade.

Ever since that night, she had been working late in the kitchen, performing mindless tasks. Washing pots and pans several times, scrubbing the sinks and counters obsessively until they gleamed. She was always intent on finding things to keep her busy, to occupy her mind so she wouldn't keep seeing the image of her son sinking in the lake. So that she wouldn't think of Jason trashing weakly as the water filled his lungs.

Steve's father had kept her on as the camp cook, feeling sorry for her, sympathizing with her loss even though he'd had his doubts about her coming back after her son had drowned. Questioning the wisdom of her being where it all had happened, seeing the lake, hearing the laughter of other children. She had begged him, pleaded with him and he had relented. She seemed to need it. It seemed to help her, being around the children. It seemed to mitigate her loss and she was so good with them, so attentive and caring. Perhaps it was just the therapy she needed for overcoming her grief but the first seeds of the madness had already taken root. Being around the children only made her miss Jason that much more. Seeing them playfully splashing in the lake only made her think of Jason thrashing pitifully as he vainly fought to stay afloat. It made her think of his tiny body down in the muck at the bottom of the lake, slowly rotting.

No matter how hard she worked, trying to exhaust herself to the point where she could no longer even think, she could not rid herself of the pain that ate away at her, pain that slowly turned to raging hatred of those who were responsible for Jason's death.

At night, she dreamed of him and dreamed of his rotting body rising up from the lake. She heard his voice calling to her on the wind.

"Help me, mommy! Mommy! Help me!"

Someone trained in psychiatry might have spotted the tell-tale signs.

The obsessive way she went about her tasks, performing them all with a single-minded abnormal intensity.

Someone who knew what to look for might have noticed her gradual withdrawal, the increasing periods of preoccupation, the manic overcompensating, forced cheerfulness around other people, the edge of hysteria in her laughter, the dark foreboding in her silences. But no one noticed and madness had a crafty tendency to masquerade as sanity for fear of being discovered.

She had heard them singing—she had stood inside the

darkened cabin, watching the children sleeping peacefully, tears running down their cheeks. She went through their cabins every night to look at them while they slept, to bless them, to pray for their safety and it broke her heart to see them laying there, so sweet and innocent—so quiet. Jason had always been so quiet, and she had heard them singing. She thought of Jason—alone and filled with fear as he sank into the murky water.

And as they sang, the words came drifting to her on the warm summer breeze.

"River Jordan is deep and wiiiiide, Halluuuuuulejiah…."

She couldn't stop the tears. The pain was more than she could bear. She stared down at the tiny sleeping forms. So quiet. So still.

"Milk and honey on the other siiiiiiiide, Halluuuuuuulejiah…"

Poor Jason… sleeping on the bottom of the lake, alone. No one had heard him calling out for help. No one came in to answer his cries. No one had saved him and she heard them singing. She had stood in the shadows, watching them, watching the way they looked at one another—seeing the lust in their eyes. The way that boy and girl kept looking at each other while they sang. It was dirty. Filthy.

She saw them get up and walk off, hand in hand, heading toward the barn. Saw them pause at the door to kiss, to run their hands over one another's bodies.

Jason was drowning and no one could hear. They couldn't hear because he was crying out for help and she heard them singing and she didn't remember going back into the kitchen. She didn't remember taking the carving knife out of the drawer. She had only the vaguest memories of entering the barn, the knife in her hand as she quietly climbed the stairs to the loft where they were lying on top of one another, moaning and groaning like animals. But she remembered their screams.

Yes! Screams, she had thought, as she had hacked away at them. Scream, no one will hear you—just as you never heard Jason!

She heard the once again as Alice screamed in terror at the sight of Steve Christie's butchered body and she smiled as she moved swiftly in the direction of the screams. The eight-inch hunting knife grasped firmly in her hand. Her lips moved as a small voice, a child's voice issued from her throat.

"Kill her, Mommy! Kill her!"

She quickened her pace.

"Don't let her get away, Mommy! Don't let her live!"

"I won't, Jason. I won't."

Chapter 10

Steve was dead.

The horror of seeing his corpse was compounded by the knowledge that her last hope of rescue had vanished. She was the only one left alive. She suddenly remembered the rifle that Steve had kept in the office. She remembered arguing with Steve about wanting him to get rid of it and now she thought of that rifle as her last chance.

He had given in to her request and put it somewhere—where? She had think.

The barn!

She remembered he had taken it out there and hung it high on the wall, well out of reach of any small children. She ran as fast as she could to the barn, praying she could make it in time. She reached the door and pushed it back, sliding it shut behind her then leaned against it for a moment to catch her breath.

No time! She told herself , No time! She'll be in here any minute!

She ran to the opposite wall and climbed up on a table, reaching for the rifle mounted on hooks used to hold tools. She pulled it down and checked it.

Of course. Steve had unloaded it.

But the bullets had to be somewhere! Where would he have put them?

She started searching madly through the doors of the workbench, pawing through the tools.

"Where are the goddamn bullets?" She cried, sobbing through fear.

One of the cabins was locked with chains. They had to be in there! She damned Steve for being so conscientious.

All the lights in the camp suddenly came on as Mrs. Voorhees started up the generator once again.

With a cry of desperation, Alice began hammering on the chain with the rifle butt.

The chain held.

She smashed at it with all her might, trying to concentrate on breaking the lock but it was no use.

Trust Steve to use case-hardened steel.

Damnit, she thought, Damnit. She had to break it! She simply had to!

The racket she was making was sure to—

The barn door slid open. Mrs. Voorhees stood in the entrance, her eyes glittering with an insane light. Alice dropped to her knees and leveled the empty rifle at her. Mrs. Voorhees smiled.

"Come, dear," she cooed, "It'll be easier for you than it was for Jason."

She moved forward slowly, as if in a trance, oblivious to the rifle pointed at her. Whether she knew it was empty or not seemed to make no difference. She wasn't going to stop.

"Kill her, Mommy!" she said in a small, child's voice. "Kill her! Kill herrrr!"

In desperation, Alice hurled the empty rifle at her. It struck her in the stomach, and she doubled over with a grunt, but it didn't slow her down for more than a second or two. Alice started grabbing anything that was within reach: a ball of twine, a small can of paint, a box of nails, snatching things at random, throwing them at the crazy woman. But Mrs. Voorhees kept batting the objects away, relentlessly closing the distance between them.

Alice found herself backed into a corner. She sobbed as Mrs. Voorhees seized her with one hand and started to slap her face with the other. Hard, powerful, stinging blows that snapped Alice's head back. She had never been hit so hard in her entire life. Her legs started to sag beneath her.

"That's right," said Mrs. Voorhees, grinning triumphantly, grabbing her with both hands and pulling her up to her feet.

"That's right." She picked her up and threw her across the room as easily as if Alice were a rag doll.

Alice struck a table, which collapsed beneath her. She fell to the floor, stunned but stark terror galvanized her into movement and she rolled, scambling for the fallen rifle as the woman came at her again. She grabbed the rifle in both hands and as Mrs. Voorhees bent down over her, she swung it with all her might.

The rifle but cracked against the side of her head and Mrs. Voorhees staggered. Alice jammed the rifle butt into her face.

Mrs. Voorhees fell back on a pile of mattresses and Alice didn't wait to see if she'd get up again.

She turned up and ran, bolting through the door, intent on putting as much distance between them as possible.

She had to find a place to hide. She had to get away. Her only instinct was to flee.

Mrs. Voorhees groaned as she slowly got back on her feet.

"Kill her, Mommy…" she whined in her childish voice, "Kill her… she can't hide… no place to hide..."

She moved to the barn door and stood, looking out, listening for the sound of running footsteps.

"Get her, Mommy… get her… kill her… kill her… kill her!"

She started towards the lake, heading straight for the dock like a hunter stalking prey. She heard the running footsteps receding down

the path and she paused, listening intently but the footsteps had stopped. The girl was trapped.

She smiled.

"Kill her… kill her…"

There was nowhere to run.

"Kill her…"

No escape. No hope. She was down there someplace, huddling like a frightened, guilty little animal, knowing she was going to die. Just like Jason had known the horrible reality as he slowly weakened.

As his little muscles failed in their struggle to stay afloat as his tears were washed away by the water that enveloped him.

"Kill her…"

She had punished all of them—every single one of them. Had made them feel what her Jason had felt—that stark, unreasoning terror of impending death. They should have watched him! They should have protected him! They had failed him, and they had killed him and now they had paid the price.

There was only one more left. One more and it would be finished.

She breathed heavily as she crept down to the dock, listening for any rustle of movement, any telltale sob.

Yes, cry… she thought, cry as Jason cried… suffer as Jason suffered.

This one would not die quickly.

Alice bit down on her fist to keep from making any sound as the woman moved past her. She crouched down behind a pile of lumber by the dock, watching Mrs. Voorhees as she watched right by her hiding place—pushing every couple of seconds to listen—staring out into the darkness.

Don't even breathe, she told herself, fighting the urge to scream. She had to overcome the fear. She had to think. Nothing seemed to stop the madwoman. She had the abnormal strength of the hopelessly insane.

God, there had to be some way to stop her. She just kept on coming.

Alice felt the tears rolling down her cheeks as she tried to catch her breath. She couldn't think straight, no matter how hard she tried. She was trembling violently. Panic threatened to overwhelm her completely. Every instinct screamed at her to run but she knew running would be useless. She could run into the woods, but she didn't know the area and Mrs. Voorhees did. She had managed to stay hidden and kill them off one by one. What possible chance did Alice have? She knew she couldn't run down the road. She'd never be able to outrun the crazy woman. And besides, Mrs. Voorhees had the car. She'd

never make it back to town.

God, thought Alice, what am I going to do?

She remained perfectly still, afraid to move a muscle. The rain had stopped but the wind was still raging, and the black clouds rolled away, revealing a full moon.

She peaked out from her hiding place and saw Mrs. Voorhees' white sweater as the woman moved down by the dock, searching near the boathouse.

Slowly, carefully, trying not to step on any branches blown down by the storm, Alice crept from her hiding place and headed back toward the cabins, glancing over her shoulder fearfully. If only she could find some place to hide. Some place where she could barricade herself. If only she could manage to make it until daylight. Someone was bound to come out to the camp. It was her only chance.

Running on tiptoe, clenching her teeth to keep from crying out, she ran back to the main cabin. It was an obvious place. Maybe the woman wouldn't think to look there. If she barricaded herself inside again… No. that wouldn't do, she thought, that would only give her hiding place away. She could barricade the door, but there was nothing she could do about the windows.

She ran inside the cabin and closed the door. Her wild gaze fell on Brenda's body, lying on the floor in a pool of blood amid shards of shattered glass. She whimpered, biting her lips to stop the screams that threatened to tear loose from her throat.

She had to find a place to hide, but where?

The pantry!

She slipped to the window and glanced out. There was no sign of Mrs. Voorhees.

Once inside the small pantry, she backed up against the wall and huddled in the darkness, trying not to breathe. Someone had to come! The lines must have been blown down by the storm and they wouldn't be able to call the camp to find out of everything was alright. They'd have to send someone but what if no one came?

No, don't think of that, she told herself, someone has to come!

She gulped and took a deep breath, trying to steady her nerves, to stop her heart from pounding.

She won't give up, she thought, I've seen her. I can identify her as the killer. She knows that she can't let me live.

She brought her hands to her face, sobbing quietly. It was hopeless. The cabin door slammed open and she froze as the lights came on. She could see the light through the cracks in the boards of the wooden door. She could hear the woman moving around out there. Something crashed to the floor.

Glass tinkled.

Go Away! Alice shut her eyes tightly and prayed. Please, please go away!

Suddenly, the cabin was silent. Alice opened her eyes and listened, holding her breath. The footsteps outside the pantry had stopped. She huddled on the floor just by the door, leaning against it, shivering and biting her bottom lip.

Please, please…

The doorknob turned, the door started to rattle and she felt the impact of Mrs. Voorhees throwing her shoulder against it. She scrambled to her feet and backed away, looking at the shelves around her, desperately seeking something she could use as a weapon.

She grabbed a large iron skillet and held it before her with both hands, staring wide-eyed at the door. The door shivered as Mrs. Voorhees repeatedly threw herself against it. But it held. She couldn't get inside.

Alice sobbed with relief. And then, she heard the sound of something hard hitting the door. A chopping sound. One of the boards splintered as the blade of a machete ripped through again and again as the mad woman continued to hack at it. A large piece of the door broke loose and fell inside.

Mrs. Voorhees looked through the gap, grinning insanely. She reached through and opened the latch, throwing the door wide open.

"No! No! No!" Alice felt the scream coming and she couldn't stop it. Mrs. Voorhees raised the machete and lunged with a yell.

Without thinking, reacting purely by instinct, Alice raised the skillet. There was a loud clang as the machete struck it. Glancing to one side, screaming hysterically, Alice swung the skillet once more. It struck the woman in the shoulder, stunning her momentarily but Alice didn't stop. She swung the skillet again and struck the woman's head with all her strength. Hearing the dull sound of metal hitting bone again and again. Mrs. Voorhees cried out and staggered back, bringing her hand up to protect her head.

Alice kept pounding at her, furiously until she fell back on the floor. She stood over the fallen body, ready to bring the skillet down again but Mrs. Voorhees didn't move.

Alice held her breath. The woman lay motionless on the floor. Alice couldn't tell if she was breathing.

Cautiously, keeping as much distance as she could between herself and the woman's body, Alice edged out into the kitchen. She reached out with her foot and prodded Mrs. Voorhees in the side, half expecting her to jerk up and grab her ankle in a powerful grip. But the woman didn't stir.

There was a large bruise over her eye where the skillet has struck her. The skin had split and blood slowly trickled down her face.

Swallowing hard, Alice turned the body over with her foot. There was a dark puddle of blood on the floor beneath the woman's head.

Alice dropped the skillet. God, she thought, she's dead. I've killed her.

Relief and revulsion overcame her at once and she ran out of the cabin, gasping, drawing in deep lungfuls of the cool, night air.

I'm alive, she told herself over and over again. Thank God I'm alive. I'm alive. I'm alive.

She couldn't stop shaking. She wondered down to the lake and stood in a daze. Suddenly, her knees felt weak and she crouched on the ground by the canoes, kneeling and looking at her reflection in the moonlit water. She felt numb. She stared at her reflection. It seemed as if she was looking at a strangers image. The face that stared back at her was void of expression. She wanted to cry but no more tears would come. She held herself as the convulsion started and she thought she was going to throw up. Her insides were churning, and her throat felt dry. She couldn't swallow. She longed for the feel of the cool water on her face. And she leaned forward.

A shadow fell across her. There was another image shimmering in the lake. The figure of a tall woman with blond hair, wearing a white, blood stained sweater, raising a machete. Terror sent adrenaline trip hammering through her as Alice screamed and seized a canoe paddle, spinning around holding up the paddle to ward off the blow. The steel blade whistled down and bit into the paddle, chopping it in half. And Alice felt the impact shudder through her arms. She fell, scrambling to grab the severed paddle, rolled as the blade of the machete swept past her, missing her face by inches and swung the paddle hard as the machete came down again.

The wood connected with the blade and sent it spinning from the woman's grasp but the force of her swing had pulled Alice off balance before she could regain it. She felt herself seized from behind.

Screaming, she flailed her arms and elbows, twisted loose and pulled away, then felt a sharp pain in her shoulder as Mrs. Voorhees struck her with the broken paddle. Alice fell on her back and rolled to the side as Mrs. Voorhees stabbed down with the jagged end of the paddle, barely missing her.

The splintered wood sank into the soft ground as Mrs. Voorhees fell forward. Overbalanced Alice leapt on top of her, desperately fighting for her life like a cornered animal. They rolled over and over on the ground, clawing and pummeling each other but the older woman was stronger. She rolled Alice over and got on top of her, trying to pin her arms down with her knees, grabbing her around the throat and squeezing.

Alice fought for breath, squirming beneath her, choking as the

powerful fingers closed around her throat. She managed to lunge forward and fasten her teeth around the woman's wrist. She bit down hard, drawing blood. Mrs. Voorhees cried out and released her. Alice shoved away, coughing, gasping for breath, struggling to her feet. She started to run but a hand closed around her ankle and threw her to the ground. She hit hard, falling on her chest, twisting as she felt the woman climbing up her leg and straddling her back.

Grabbing a fistful of her hair and hammering her head into the ground. Alice buckled and thrashed like a fish out of water, almost dislodging her, squirming around and sinking her teeth into her arm, biting down with all her might. She felt the woman's grip relax and she hurled herself to the side, throwing her off, gasping for breath as she scrambled away.

Staggering to her feet, her gaze fell on the machete lying on the ground about five yards away. She lunged for it in desperation, felt her fingers close around the handle, picked it up and turned. Mrs. Voorhees was running toward her, her face twisted into a feral snarl of rage. Alice raised the machete. Mrs. Voorhees tried to stop herself but she had too much forward momentum and her eyes grew wide as Alice brought the blade back. She opened her mouth. Alice gripped the machete tightly and screamed as she swung it in a wide sweeping arc like a baseball player connecting with a fastball. Mrs. Voorhees threw her hands up to ward off the blow and the blade struck her neck and sliced right through it.

The force of Alice's desperate blow, chopping through the spinal column, decapitating Mrs.

Voorhees with one stroke. Her severed head fell to the wet ground. The mouth opened in a soundless scream. The eyes blinking as blood gushed from the stump of her neck. Blood spurting in fountains from her severed arteries.

For a second, it seemed to Alice as if everything had somehow shifted into slow motion. The headless body remained standing for a moment, hands up, fingers clutching in the air, then it slowly collapsed like a marionette with its strings cut. Hitting the ground and staining it with a wash of blood that poured from the grizzly wound. For a long moment, Alice simply stood there, numb and slack jawed, her eyes wide, staring at the horror lying at her feet.

Then, the bloody machete slipped from her fingers and fell softly to the ground. In a daze, she turned away and walked unsteadily to the water, unable to comprehend what she had done. Her mind had retreated into shock. Without fully realizing what she was doing, Alice bent down and pushed one of the canoes into the water, stepped into it, and drifted onto the lake, into the darkness as if safety could be found on the water—out where no one could reach her. Away from the

horror of what had happened on the shore.

She slumped down on the boat, just letting it glide as her mind was drifting. Sifting through random, disconnected images as if drugged, she stared vacantly out across the water at the moonlight rippling on the surface of the lake. She trailed her hand in the water, feeling the coolness on her fingers, vaguely aware of the gentle rocking of the boat. She felt no relief at having escaped alive. She felt absolutely nothing. She was not aware of time passing. At some point, she noticed the sky turning grey with the first light of dawn. She became dimly aware of the sun's rays glinting on the lake. She seemed to hear as if from a great distance the sounds of birds singing.

Morning came and the mist began to dissipate. The woods around the lake seemed quiet and peaceful. Everything was still washed clean by the storm. The surface of the lake was mirror smooth.

A police car pulled up to the dock, lights flashing though Alice heard no siren. Two officers got out and walked down to the shore.

As if through a haze, Alice saw them cup their hands around their mouths, calling out to her but she couldn't hear a thing. She felt no sense of urgency—no desire to move. She just wanted to keep drifting out upon the lake where it was quiet and safe.

Something came bursting up out of the lake beside her boat!

She felt the spray of water. She caught a brief glimpse of a body that looked like a corpse, smelled the sharp odor of decomposing flesh, felt clammy, slimy, rotting skin as an arm encircled her and seized her, pulling her out of the boat into the water, dragging her down beneath the lake. She opened her mouth to scream.

Epilogue

"No! No! No!" She struggled against the arm dragging her down and suddenly saw bright light.

"Alice! Alice! Everything's alright!" the nurse said, her arm encircling Alice's chest, urging her back down onto the hospital bed.

"Come on! It's alright."

"20 milligrams of valium," the doctor said.

The nurse nodded and let her go.

The doctor bent down over the bed.

"It's all right now, Alice," he said in a soothing tone, "It's all over. Everything's over."

Alice was breathing heavily, hyperventilating. She glanced around wildly at the hospital room, not remembering how she got here.

"Roll over," said the Nurse.

Alice stared at her, eyes wide.

"Roll over," the Nurse repeated gently.

Alice rolled over onto her side and felt the nurse parting her gown, swabbing her cheek with a ball of cotton soaked in alcohol and then felt the brief sharp sting of the injection. She turned onto her back once more and saw the doctor standing there and a policeman too. He looked familiar. One of the cops from Crystal Lake.

Tierney. Sergeant Tierney. He must have been the one who brought her here. She had to be in the county hospital. It was really over.

"Doctor Miller," the PA announced, "You're wanted in surgery. Doctor Miller."

"Okay," nodded at Tierney. Tierney approached the bed, glancing at the nurse briefly. He looked down at Alice and smiled.

"Your folks are on their way."

She sat up. Her folks? But her father was… of course. Tierney didn't know. He must have spoken to her mother.

She started to calm down. Thank God I made it, she thought, I really made it. I'm alive. But all the others?

"Is anyone else alive?" she asked weakly, looking up at Tierney. His mouth tightened.

"Are… are they all dead?"

Sergeant Tierney nodded.

"Yes, Ma'am."

He would never forget the sight of those bodies, slaughtered like animals. He had never seen anything like it, not even in the war. All things considered, it was a miracle that this poor girl hadn't lost her mind.

"Two of my men pulled you out of the lake," he said, "We

thought you were dead too." He paused, almost as if afraid to as the next question. "Do you… remember very much?"

"The boy," Alice stared at him intently, "Is he dead too?"

"Who?"

"The boy—Jason."

He frowned.

"Jason?"

"In the lake!" cried Alice, "The one who attacked me, the one who pulled me underneath the water!"

Tierney felt the chill run down his spine.

"Ma'am," he said, glancing uneasily at the nurse, "We didn't find any boy…"

Alice shook her head.

"But he—"

The injection began to take effect. She felt a bit lightheaded, drowsy as if she were starting to float, floating in the water, drifting.

"Then… he's still there," she whispered, her voice trailing off.

Tierney glanced at the nurse in alarm and the woman shook her head.

They don't believe me, Alice thought, they think I dreamed it. They think I'm crazy but I'm not crazy. I didn't dream it!

She felt the nurse easing her back down onto the bed and the room started to get blurry.

No, she thought, that was 20 years ago. How could he?

But she remembered something rising up from the water.

That nauseating smell, a powerful arm grabbing her, pulling her down. That grotesque, misshapen face—the rotting flesh.

She saw the nurse draw the curtains and she felt herself starting to drift off. Suddenly, she was afraid to close her eyes—afraid of the darkness—terrified of the nightmares she knew would inevitably come.

Just before she fell asleep, partly from the drug, partly from sheer exhaustion, she thought of the gruesome apparition that came out of the lake and she knew whatever it was, it had been no dream.

And whatever it was, it was still out there somewhere, waiting… waiting…